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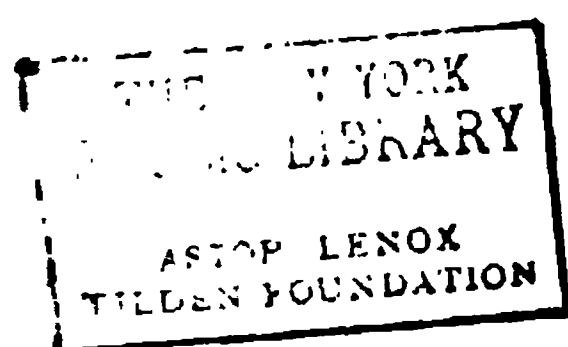
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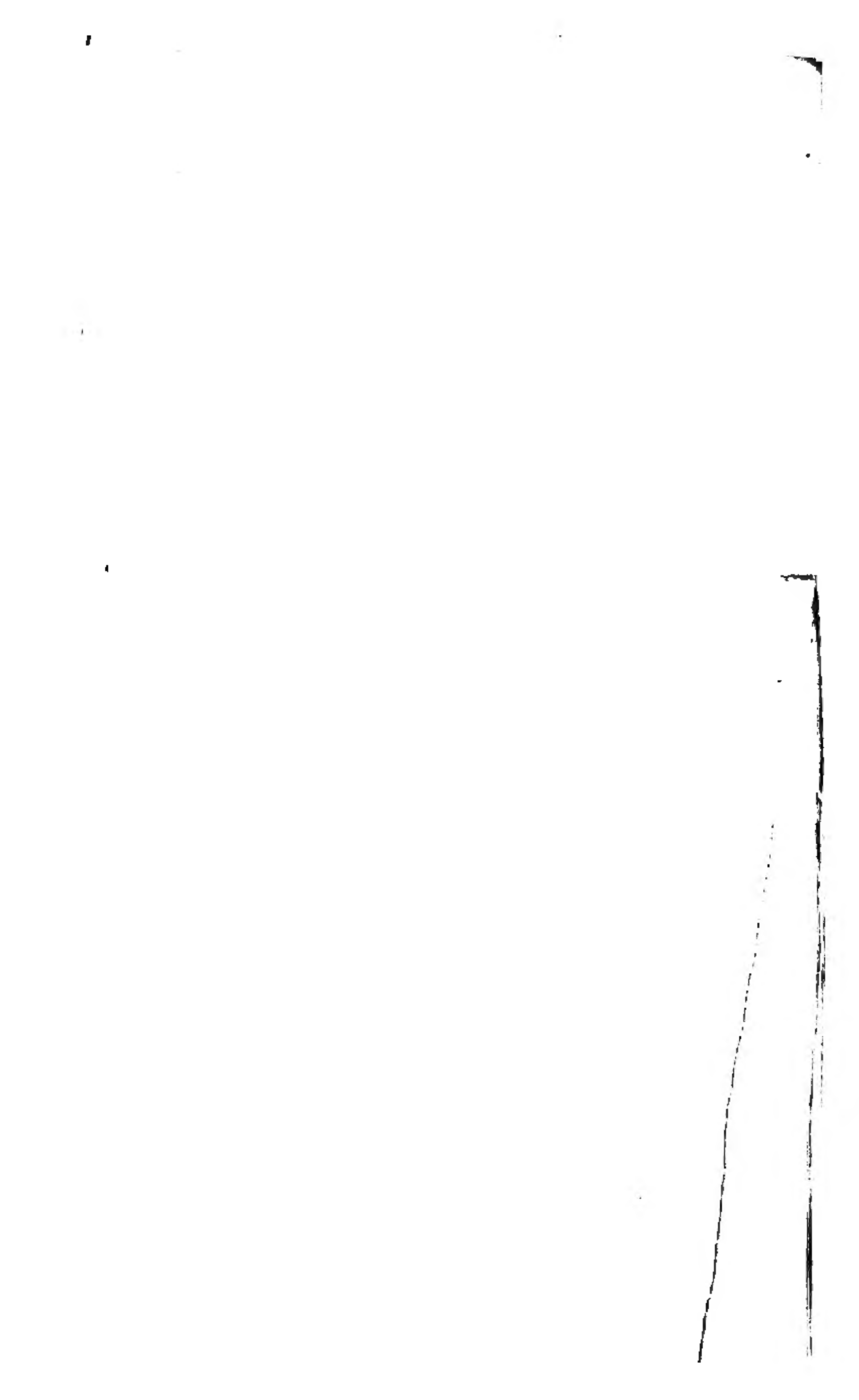
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THE
MARQUIS DE VILLEMER.

BY
GEORGE SAND.

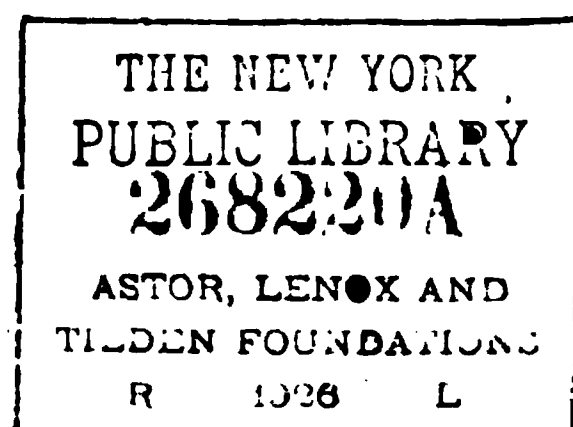
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY
RALPH KEELER.

NEW YORK:
R. WORTHINGTON, 750 BROADWAY.

1879.

No 5. 1927.



1928
1928
1928

THE MARQUIS DE VILLEMER.

I.

LETTER TO MADAME CAMILLE HEUDEBERT,
AT D——, VIA BLOIS.

DO not worry, dear sister, for here I am, at Paris, without accident or fatigue. I have slept a few hours, breakfasted on a cup of coffee, made my toilet, and, in a moment, I am going to take a carriage to Madame d'Arglade's, that she may present me to Madame de Villemer. This evening I will write you the result of the solemn interview, but I want first to mail you these few words, that you may feel easy about my journey and my health.

Take courage with me, my Camille ; all will go well. God does not abandon those who depend upon him, and who do their best to second his tender providence. What has been saddest for me in my resolution are your tears, — yours and the dear little ones' ; it is hard for me to restrain mine when I think of them ; but you *must* see it was absolutely necessary. I could not sit with folded hands when you have four children to rear. Since I have courage and health, and no other claim upon me in this world than that of my tenderness for you and for those poor angels, it was for me to go forth and try to gain our livelihood. I will reach that end, be sure. Sustain me instead of regretting me and making me weaker ; that is all I ask of you. And with this, my much-loved sister, I embrace you and our dear children with all my heart. Do not make them weep by speaking to them of me ; but try, nevertheless, not to let them forget me ; that would pain me beyond measure.

CAROLINE DE SAINT-GENEIX.

January 3, 1845.

SECOND LETTER. — TO THE SAME.

Victory, great victory ! my good sister. I have just returned from our great lady's, and — success un hoped for, as you shall see. Since I have one more evening of liberty, and that probably the last, I am going to profit by it in giving you an account of the interview. It will seem as if I were chatting with you again at the fireside, rocking Charley with one hand and amusing Lili with the other. Dear loves, what are they doing at this moment ? They do not imagine that I am all alone in a melancholy room of a public house, for, in the fear of being troublesome to Madame d'Arglade, I put up at a little hotel ; but I shall be very comfortable at the Marchioness's, and this lone evening is not a bad one for me to collect myself and think of you without interruption. I did well, besides, not to count too much upon the hospitality which was offered me, because Madame d'Arglade is absent, and so I had to introduce myself to Madame de Villemer.

You asked me to give you a description of her : she is about sixty years old, but she is infirm and seldom leaves her arm-chair ; that and her suffering face make her look fifteen years older. She could never have been beautiful, or comely of form ; yet her countenance is expressive and has a character of its own. She is very dark ; her eyes are magnificent, just a little hard, but frank. Her nose is straight and too nearly approaches her mouth, which is not at all handsome. Her mouth is ordinarily scornful ; still, her whole face gleams and mellow with a human sympathy when she smiles, and she smiles readily. My first impression agrees with my last. I believe

this woman very good by principle rather than by impulse, and courageous rather than cheerful. She has intelligence and cultivation. In fine, she does not differ much from the description which Madame d'Arglade gave us of her.

She was alone when I was conducted into her apartment. Gracefully enough she made me sit down close to her, and here is a report of our conversation:—

"You have been highly recommended to me by Madame d'Arglade, whom I esteem very much indeed. I know that you belong to an excellent family, that you have talents and an honorable character, and that your life has been blameless. I have therefore the greatest wish that we may understand each other and agree. For that, there must be two things: one that my offer may seem satisfactory to you; the other that our views may not be too much opposed, as that would be the source of frequent misunderstandings. Let us deal with the first question. I offer you twelve hundred francs a year."

"So I have been told, Madame, and I have accepted."

"Have I not been told, too, that you would perhaps find that insufficient?"

"It is true, that is little for the needs of my situation; but Madame is the judge of her own affairs, and since I am here —"

"Speak frankly; you think that is not enough?"

"I cannot say that. It is probably more than my services are worth."

"I am far from saying so, and you — you say it from modesty; but you fear that will not be enough to keep you? Do not let it trouble you; I will take everything upon myself; you will have no expense here except for your toilet, and in that regard I make no requirement. And do you love dress?"

"Yes, Madame, very much; but I shall abstain from it, because in that matter you make no requirement."

The sincerity of my answer appeared to astonish the Marchioness. Perhaps I ought not to have spoken without restraint, as it is my habit to do. She took a little time to collect herself. Finally she began to smile and said, "Ah, so! why do you love dress? You are young, pretty, and poor; you

have neither the need nor the right to bedizen yourself?"

"I have so little right to do it," I answered, "that I go simply clad, as you see."

"That is very well, but you are troubled because your toilet is not more elegant?"

"No, Madame, I am not troubled about it at all, since it must be so. I see that I spoke without reflection when I told you that I was fond of dress, and that has given you a poor idea of my understanding. I pray you to see nothing in that avowal but the effect of my sincerity. You questioned me concerning my tastes, and I answered as if I had the honor to be known to you; it was perhaps an impropriety, and I beg you to pardon it."

"That is to say," rejoined she, "if I knew you, I would be aware that you accept the necessities of your position without ill-temper and without murmuring?"

"Yes, Madame, that is it exactly."

"Well, your impropriety, if it is one at all, is far from displeasing me. I love sincerity above all things; I love it perhaps more than I do understanding, and I make an appeal to your entire frankness. Now what was it that persuaded you to accept such slight remuneration for coming here and keeping company with an infirm and perhaps tiresome old woman?"

"In the first place, Madame, I have been told that you are very intelligent and kind, and on that account I did not expect to find life tiresome with you; and then, even if I should have to endure a great deal, it is my duty to accept it all rather than to remain idle. My father having left us no fortune, my sister was at least well enough married, and I felt no scruples in living with her; but her husband, who had nothing but the salary of his place, recently died after a long and cruel illness, which had absorbed all our little savings. It therefore naturally falls upon me to support my sister and her four children."

"With twelve hundred francs!" cried the Marchioness. "No, that cannot be. Ah! Madame d'Arglade did not tell me that. She, without doubt,

feared the distrust which misfortune inspires; but she was very much mistaken in my case; your self-devotion interests me, and, if we can agree in other respects, I hope to make you sensible of my regard. Trust in me; I will do my best."

"Ah! Madame," I replied, "whether I have the good fortune to suit you or not, let me thank you for this good prompting of your heart." And I kissed her hand impulsively, at which she did not seem displeased.

"Yet," continued she, after another silence, in which she appeared to distrust her own suggestion, "what if you are slightly frivolous and a little of a coquette."

"I am neither the one nor the other."

"I hope not. Yet you are very pretty. They did not tell me that either, and the more I look at you, the more I think you are even remarkably pretty. That troubles me a little, and I do not conceal it from you."

"Why, Madame?"

"Why? Yes, you are right. The ugly believe themselves beautiful, and to the desire to please they add the faculty of making themselves ridiculous. You would better perhaps have the art of pleasing, — provided you do not abuse it. Well now, are you good enough girl and strong enough woman to give me a little account of your past life? Have you had some romance? Yes, you have, — have n't you? It is impossible that it could have been otherwise? You are twenty-two or twenty-three years old —"

"I am twenty-four, and I have had no other romance than the one of which I am going to tell you in two words. At seventeen I was sought in marriage by a person who pleased me, and who withdrew when he learned that my father had left more debts than capital. I was very much grieved, but I have forgotten it all, and I have sworn never to marry."

"Ah! that is spite, and not forgetfulness."

"No, Madame, that was an effort of the reason. Having nothing, but believing myself to be something, I did not wish to make a foolish marriage; and, far from having any spite, I have for-

given him who abandoned me. I forgave him especially the day when, seeing my sister and her four children in misery, I understood the sorrow of the father of a family who dies with the pain of knowing that he can leave nothing to his orphans."

"And you saw that ingrate again?"

"No, never. He is married, and I have ceased to think of him."

"And since then you have never thought of any other?"

"No, Madame."

"How have you done?"

"I do not know. I believe I have not had time to think of myself. When one is very poor, and does not want to give up to misery, the days are well filled out."

"But you have, nevertheless, been much sought after, pretty as you are, — have you not?"

"No, Madame, no one has troubled me in that way. I do not believe in persecutions which are not at all encouraged."

"I think as you do, and I am satisfied with your manner of answering. Do you, then, fear nothing for yourself in the future?"

"I fear nothing at all."

"And will not this solitude of the heart make you sad or sullen?"

"I do not foresee it in any way. I am naturally cheerful, and I have preserved my command over myself in the midst of the most cruel tests. I have no dream of love in my head; I am not romantic. If I ever change I shall be very much astonished. That, Madame, is all I can tell you about myself. Will you take me such as I represent myself with confidence, since I can after all but give myself out for what I know myself to be?"

"Yes, I take you for what you are, — an excellent young woman, full of frankness and good-will. It remains to be seen whether you really have the little attainments that I require."

"What must I do?"

"Talk, in the first place; and upon that point I am already satisfied. And then you must read, and play a little music."

"Try me right away; and if the little I can do suits you —"

"Yes, yes," she said, putting a book into my hands, "do read; I want to be enchanted with you."

At the end of a page she took the book away from me, with the remark that my reading was perfect. Then came the music. There was a piano in the room. She asked me if I could read at sight. As that is about all I can do, I could satisfy her again on that point. Finally she told me that, knowing my writing and my style of composition, from letters of mine which Madame d'Arglade had shown her, she considered that I would be an excellent secretary, and she dismissed me, giving me her hand, and saying many kind things to me. I asked her for one day — to-morrow — in order to see some people here with whom we are acquainted, and she has given orders that I should be installed Saturday. —

Dear sister, I have just been interrupted. What a pleasant surprise! It is a note from Madame de Villemer, — a note of three lines, which I transcribe for you: —

"Permit me, dear child, to send you a trifle on account, for your sister's children, and a little dress for yourself. As you are fond of dress we must humor the weaknesses of those we like. It is arranged and understood that you are to have a hundred and fifty francs a month, and that I take upon myself to keep you in clothes."

How good and motherly that is, — is it not? I see that I shall love that woman with all my heart, and that I had not estimated her, at first sight, as highly as she deserved. She is more impulsive than I thought. The five hundred franc bill I enclose in this letter. Make haste! some wood in the cellar, some woollen petticoats for Lili, who needs them, and a chicken from time to time on that poor table. A little wine for you; your stomach is quite shattered, and it will take so little to restore it. The chimney must be repaired; it smokes atrociously: it is unbearable; it may weaken the children's eyes, — and those of my little girl are so beautiful!

Really, I am ashamed of the dress which is intended for me, — a dress of magnificent pearl-gray silk. Ah, how

foolish I was to say that I liked to be well dressed! A dress for forty francs would have satisfied my ambition, and here I am attired in one worth two hundred, while my poor sister is repairing her rags. I do not know where to hide myself; but do not at least think that I am humiliated by receiving a present. I shall relieve my conscience of the burden of these kindnesses, my heart tells me. You see, Camille, everything succeeds with me as soon as I enter upon it. I light, the first thing, upon an excellent woman, I get more than I had agreed to take, and I am received and treated as a child whom it is desired to adopt and spoil. And then to think that you kept me back a whole six months, imposing an increase of privations upon yourself and tearing your hair at the idea of my working for you! Good sister, were you not then a bad mother? Ought not those dear treasures of children to have been considered above all things, and should they not have silenced even our own regard for each other? Ah! I was very much afraid of failure, nevertheless, I will confess to you now, when I took out of the house our last few louis for the expenses of my journey, at the risk of returning without having pleased this lady. God has been concerned in it, Camille; I prayed to him this morning with such confidence! I asked him so fervently to make me amiable, decorous, and persuasive. Now I am going to bed, for I am overcome with fatigue. I love you, my little sister, you know, more than anything else in the world, and much more than myself. Do not grieve about me then; I am just now the happiest girl that lives, and yet I am not with you and do not see our children as they sleep! You see, indeed, that there is no true happiness in selfishness, since, alone as I am, separated from all that I love, my heart beats with joy in spite of my tears, and I am going to thank God upon my knees before I fall asleep. CAROLINE.

While Mlle. de Saint-Geneix was writing to her sister, the Marchioness de Villemer was talking with the youngest of her sons in her little drawing-room in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The house

was large and respectable; yet the Marchioness, formerly rich and now in very narrow circumstances, — we shall soon see why, — had of late occupied the second floor in order to turn the first to account.

"Well, dear mother," said the Marquis, "are you satisfied with your new companion? Your people have told me that she has arrived."

"My dear child," answered the Marchioness, "I have but one word to say of her, and that is that she has bewitched me."

"Really? Tell me about it."

"Upon my word, I am not too sure that I dare. I am afraid of turning your head in advance."

"Fear nothing," was the sorrowful reply of the Marquis, whom his mother had tried to win into a smile; even if I were so easy to inflame, I know too well what I owe to the dignity of your house and to the repose of your life."

"Yes, yes, my friend; I know too that I can be at ease upon a question of honor and delicacy, when it is with you that I have to do; I can also tell you that the little D'Arglade has found for me a pearl, a diamond, and that, to commence with, this phoenix has led me into follies."

The Marchioness gave an account of her interview with Caroline, and described her thus: "She is neither tall nor short, she is well formed, has pretty little feet, the hands of a child, abundant light blond hair, a complexion of lilies and roses, perfect features, pearly teeth, a decided little nose, large sea-green eyes, which look straight at you unflinchingly, without dreaminess, without false timidity, with a candor and a confidence which please and engage; nothing of a provincial, she has manners which are excellent because they do not seem to be manners at all; much taste and gentility in the poverty of her attire; in a word, all that I feared and yet nothing that I feared, that is, beauty which inspired me with distrust and none of the affectations and pretensions which would have justified that distrust; and more, a voice and pronunciation which make real music of her reading, sterling talent as a musician, and, above all that, every

indication of mind, sense, discretion, and good-nature: to such an extent that, interested and carried away by her devotion to a poor family to which I see plainly she is sacrificing herself, I forgot my projects of economy, and have engaged to give her the eyes out of my head."

"Has she been bargaining with you?" demanded the Marquis.

"Quite the contrary, she was satisfied to take what I had determined to give her."

"In that case you did well, mother, and I am glad that you have at last a companion worthy of you. You have kept too long that hungry and sleepy old maid who worried you, and when you have a chance to replace her by a treasure, you would do very wrong to count the cost."

"Yes," replied the Marchioness, "that's what your brother also says; neither he nor you care to count the cost, my dear children, and I fear I have been too hasty in the satisfaction which I have just given myself."

"That satisfaction was necessary to you," said the Marquis with spirit, "and you ought the less to reproach yourself with it since you have yielded to your need of performing a good action."

"I acknowledge it, but I was wrong perhaps," replied the Marchioness, with a careworn expression; "one has not always the right to be charitable."

"Ah! my mother," cried the son, with a mingling of indignation and sadness, "when you are forced to deny yourself the joy of giving alms, the injury that I have done will be very great!"

"The injury! you? what injury?" rejoined the mother, astonished and troubled; "you have never done an injury, my dear son."

"Pardon me," said the Marquis, greatly moved. "I was to blame the day I engaged, out of respect to you, to pay my brother's debts."

"Hush!" cried the Marchioness, turning pale. "Let us not speak of that, we would not understand each other." She extended her hands to the Marquis to lessen the involuntary bitterness of this answer. The Marquis

kissed his mother's hands and retired shortly afterward.

The next day, Caroline de Saint-Geneix went out to mail with her own hands the registered letter which she sent to her sister, and to see some people from the remotest part of her province with whom she kept up her acquaintance. These were old friends of her family, whom she did not succeed in meeting, and she left her name without giving her address, as she no longer had a home which she could consider her own. She felt a species of sadness to think of herself thus lost and dependent in a strange house ; but she did not indulge in long reflections upon her destiny. In addition to the fact that she refused once for all to nourish in herself the least unnerving melancholy, she was not at all a timid character, and any test, howsoever unpleasant, did not set her at variance with life. There was in her organization an astonishing vitality, an ardent activity, which was all the more remarkable because it arose from great tranquillity of mind and from a singular absence of thought about herself. This character, which is exceptional enough, will develop and explain itself as much as we can make it do so, by the events of the following narrative ; but the reader must necessarily remember, what all the world knows, that no one can explain completely and set in an exact light the character of another. Every individual has in the depth of his being a mystery of power or of weakness which he himself can as little reveal as he can understand. Analysis should seem satisfactory when it comes near to truth, but it could not seize the truth in the fact without leaving some phase of the eternal problem of the soul incomplete or obscure.

II.

It was with a mingled feeling of sadness and joy that Caroline, sometimes on foot and sometimes in an omnibus, traversed all alone the great city of Paris, where she had been reared in ease, and which she had left ruined and broken as to her future, in the very

flower of her life. Let us recount in a few words, once for all, the grave, yet simple events of which she has given some outlines to the Marchioness de Villemer.

She was the daughter of a gentleman of Lower Brittany, settled in the neighborhood of Blois, and of a Mlle. de Grajac, a native of Velay. Caroline hardly knew her mother. Madame de Saint-Geneix died the third year of her marriage in giving birth to Camille, having exacted a promise from Justine Lanion to spend several years with the motherless children.

Justine Lanion — Peyraque, by marriage — was a robust and honest peasant-woman of Velay, who consented to remain eight years with M. de Saint-Geneix. She had been Caroline's nurse, and had afterward returned to her own family, whence she was soon called back to give the milk of her second child to the second daughter of her "dear lady." Thanks to this faithful creature, Caroline and Camille knew the care and tenderness of a second mother ; still, Justine could not forget her husband and her own children. She had, at last, to return to her province, and M. de Saint-Geneix took his daughters to Paris, where they were brought up in one of the convents then in fashion.

As he was not rich enough to live in Paris, he rented temporary apartments there, to which he went twice a year for the Easter Holidays and his daughters' vacations. These were also the worthy man's vacations. He practised economy the rest of the year that he might refuse nothing to his children in those days of patriarchal merry-making. Then their time was absorbed wholly in strolls, concerts, visiting the museums, excursions to the royal palaces or dinners, ruinous in their expense, — veritable pleasurings of a life, full of simple, paternal affection, indeed, but as imprudent as it well could be. The good man idolized his daughters, who were both very beautiful and as good as they were beautiful. It was a pleasant fancy with him to see them going out for a walk, dressed with perfect taste, looking fresher than their dresses and ribbons new from the shop ; to display their beauty in the light and

sunshine of Paris, that brilliant city, where he had few acquaintances, to be sure, but where the slightest notice of some casual passer-by seemed more important than any amount of provincial admiration. To make Parisians, real Parisian ladies, of these two charming girls was the dream of his life. He would have spent his whole fortune to accomplish this; and — he did so spend it.

This infatuated desire to taste the delights of life in Paris is a species of fatality which had, a few years ago, taken possession not only of the well-to-do people of the provinces, but of whole classes. Every great foreign nobleman, also, howsoever little his cultivation, rushed wildly to Paris, like a school-boy in vacation time, tore himself away from its attractions with bitter regret, and passed the rest of the year at home in devising measures to obtain the passport giving him leave to return. Even to-day, if it were not for the severity of laws which condemn Russians to Russia, and Poles to Poland, immense fortunes would vie with one another in their eagerness to come and be swallowed up in the pleasures of Paris.

The two young ladies each profited very differently by their elegant education. Camille, the younger and the prettier of the two, — which is saying a great deal, — entered heartily into the giddy tastes of her father, whom she resembled in face and in character. She was passionately fond of luxury, and it had never occurred to her that her life could ever become unhappy. Mild and loving, but not very intelligent, she became merely an accomplished young lady in the matters of style, dress, and manners. Returning to the convent at the close of her vacations, she passed three months languishing regretfully, the next three working a little in order to please her sister, who would otherwise find fault with her; and the rest of the term in dreaming about her father's return and the pleasures it would bring.

Caroline, on the other hand, was more like her mother, who had been a woman of seriousness and energy. Yet she was usually cheerful, and more demonstra-

tive even than her sister in the hearty enjoyment of their freedom. She showed herself more eager to make the most of dress, of their walks and their sight-seeing, but she relished all in a different way. She was far more intellectual than Camille, with no creative genius for Art indeed, but yet deeply sensitive to all its true manifestations. She was born appreciative; that is, she could express the unspoken thought of another with brilliancy and refinement. She repeated poetry or read music with a surprising mastery of both. She spoke little, but always well, yet with a strange precision, as if her ideas were all drawn from within. But whenever she received suggestions from outside sources, — from books, music, or the stage, — she gave the written thought a new radiance. She seemed to be the necessary instrument of genius; within the limits of interpretation, this gift of hers might have been genius itself, had it received its full development.

But this it never received. Caroline had commenced her education at ten years of age; at seventeen it was wholly broken off. This is the way it happened: M. de Saint-Geneix having an income of only twelve thousand francs, and yet dreaming of a future for his daughters worthy of their attractions, had entangled himself with pitiable ingenuousness in speculations which were to quadruple his property, and which engulfed it in instant ruin.

Very pale, and as if dazed by some powerful shock, he came one day to Paris for his daughters. He took them to his little manor-house with no explanation whatever, and complaining only of a slight fever. He lay there ill for three months, and then died of grief, confessing his ruin to his two future sons-in-law; for at the appearance of the young ladies at Blois, many suitors presented themselves, and two of them had been accepted.

The gentleman betrothed to Camille was a civil officer, a respectable man, who was sincerely fond of her, and married her in spite of everything. Caroline was engaged to a gentleman of property. He reasoned more selfishly, plead the opposition of his family, and withdrew his pretensions. Caroline was

brave. Her weaker sister would have died of grief; but she was not the one deserted. Weakness exacts respect oftener than energy. Moral courage is something invisible, and it breaks down silently. Killing a soul too leaves no trace. Therefore the strong are always buffeted, and the weak are buoyed up always.

Fortunately for Caroline, her love had not been intense. Her heart, which was naturally affectionate, had begun to feel some confidence and sympathy; but the mysterious grief and the increasing illness of her father very soon took such strong possession of her mind that she could not permit herself to dwell much upon her own happiness. The love of a noble young woman is a flower which opens in the sunshine of hope; but all hopefulness on her own account was overshadowed by the feeling that her father's life was swiftly gliding away. She saw in her betrothed only a friend who would share with her the duty of weeping. Toward him she felt gratitude and esteem; but grief stood in the way of elation and enthusiasm. Passion had not had time to blossom.

Caroline was then rather bruised than broken by desertion. Her love for her father was so great, and she mourned him so deeply, that the ruin of her own future prospects seemed to her but a secondary grief. Though she was not at all indignant, yet she was sensible of the injury, and while she revenged herself only by forgetting, she preserved toward men a certain vague resentment, which kept her from believing in love and from listening to the flatteries addressed to her beauty up to the age at which we now find her, cured, courageous, and sincerely believing herself proof against all attraction.

It is unnecessary to recount the events of the years which we have just made her pass over. All the world knows that the loss of a fortune, small or great, does not become an accomplished fact visibly from one day to the next. Settlements with creditors are attempted, a belief that something may be saved from the wreck is entertained, a series of uncertainties is passed through, of astonishments, hopes deferred, up to

the day when, seeing all efforts fruitless, the situation, good or bad, is finally accepted. Camille was prostrated by this disaster, in which, to the last moment, she refused to believe; but she was well married and did not suffer any real hardship. Caroline, with more foresight, was apparently less affected by the positive destitution which necessarily fell upon her. Her brother-in-law would not entertain the thought of their parting, and generously made her share the competence of his family; but she understood perfectly that her support was gone, and her pride increased on that account. Feeling that her sister lacked activity and a sense of order, and seeing moreover that she would be subject from year to year to the suffering and cares of maternity, Caroline became the housekeeper, the nurse of the children, in short, the first maid-servant of the little household, and into the austere duties of this self-sacrifice she contrived to work so much grace, good sense, and cheerfulness, that all was pleasant around her and she rendered more good offices than she received. Then came the illness of her brother-in-law, his death, the discovery of old debts which he had concealed, intending to pay them off, gradually and easily, out of his salary; in short, the embarrassment, anxiety, and trouble of Camille, and, at last, the utter despondency and misery of the young widow.

We have seen that, for some time, Caroline had been hesitating between the fear of leaving her sister alone and the desire to assist her by some direct effort. There was, indeed, one wealthy gentleman, neither young nor very gracious, who considered her a model housewife, and made her an offer of marriage. Caroline felt, at first vaguely but afterwards with sufficient clearness, that Camille wished her to sacrifice herself. She then determined that she would indeed make the sacrifice, but in a different way. She asked nothing better than to give up her freedom, her independence, her time, her life; but to demand the offering up of herself, soul and body, to procure a little more comfort for the family, — this was too much. She pardoned in the mother her selfishness as a sister, and without appearing

to see it, she decided upon the course which we have seen her take. She left Camille in a poor little country home, rented in the neighborhood of Blois, and set out for Paris, where we know she was kindly welcomed by Madame de Villemer, whose history we have now also briefly to relate.

Every family has its sore spot, every fortune its open wound out of which its life-blood and the very security of its existence may ebb away. The noble family of Villemer had its skeleton in the wild misdoings of the eldest son of the Marchioness. The first husband of the Marchioness had been the Duke d'Aléria, a haughty Spaniard, with a terrible disposition, who had made her as unhappy as she could be, but who, after five stormy years, had left her an ample fortune, and a son handsome, good-humored, and intelligent, though destined to become thoroughly sceptical, royally prodigal, and miserably profligate.

Having married the Marquis de Villemer, and becoming a mother and widow for the second time, the Marchioness found in Urbain, her second son, a devoted, generous friend, as austere in his habits as his brother was corrupt, rich enough by his paternal inheritance to prevent him from grieving too much about his mother's ruin; for, at the time when we begin our history of these three people, the Marchioness had little or nothing left, thanks to the life which the young Duke had led.

At this period, the young Duke was a little over thirty-six years of age, and the Marquis nearly thirty-three. The Duchess d'Aléria, as will be seen, had lost little time in becoming the Marchioness de Villemer. No one had blamed her for this. She was passionately attached to her second husband. It is even said that she had loved him as far as she might, in all honor and innocence, before her first widowhood. The Marchioness had a generous nature and was somewhat excitable. And the premature death of this second husband made her almost insane for one or two years. She would not see any one, and even her own children became almost like strangers to her. Seeing this, the

relatives of both her late husbands were disposed to set her aside and to take charge themselves of the education of her sons; but, at this idea, the Marchioness came to her senses. Nature made a great effort; her soul rose above its sorrow, her motherly feeling awoke, and the passionate crisis which made her cling to her two sons with tears and caresses, restored her power of reasoning and the control of her will. She remained an invalid, weak and prematurely old, a little peculiar in some respects, yet highly energetic in her conduct, exemplary in her affections, and truly noble in all her relations with the world. From this time forth, she began to attract notice by the brightness of her mind, which had been for a long time asleep as it were in the midst of her sorrow and her love, but which now, at last, showed itself in the form of courage.

What precedes has sufficiently established her position in this story. We will now leave Caroline de Saint-Geneix to estimate as she understands them the Marchioness and her two sons.

LETTER TO MADAME CAMILLE HEUDEBERT.

PARIS, March 15, 1845.

Yes, dear little sister, I am very well settled, as I have told you in my preceding letters. I have a pretty room, a good fire, a fine carriage, servants, and a well-furnished table. I have only to believe myself rich and a Marchioness, since, scarcely ever out of the presence of my old lady, I am necessarily a sharer in all the comforts of her life.

But you reproach me with writing very short letters. It is because, up to this time, I have had but a few moments to myself. In fact, the Marchioness, who, I believe, wished to put me a little to proof, appears now to be satisfied that I am quite sincerely devoted to her, and she permits me to leave her at midnight. So I can chat with you without having to sit up till four o'clock in the morning to do it, for the Marchioness receives till two, and she kept me an hour afterward to discuss the people whom we had just seen, — a task which,

I will confess to you as I confessed to her, began to be very wearisome to me. She thought that I was, like her, a late riser. When she learned that I always awoke at six o'clock in the morning, and could not get asleep again, she generously respected that "provincial infirmity." So, morning or evening, I shall be hereafter at your service, dear Camille.

Yes, I love this old lady, and I love her a great deal. She has a great charm for me, and the influence which she exercises over my mind comes especially from the sincerity and purity of her own. She is not without prejudices, it is true, and she has many ideas which are not, and never will be, mine; but she holds to these honestly, without anything like hypocritical subterfuge, and the antipathies which she expresses are not at all formidable; for even in her prepossessions her perfect integrity is manifest.

And besides, during the three weeks in which I have seen the great world, — since the Marchioness, without giving formal parties, receives quite a number of visits every evening, — I have become aware of a general eclipse, of which, in the remoteness of my province, I never formed so complete an idea. I assure you that, with the best of manners and a certain air of superiority, people here are as nearly nonentities as they can possibly be. They no longer have opinions on anything; they find fault with everything, and know the remedy for nothing. They speak ill of everybody, and are nevertheless on the best terms with everybody. There is no indignation about it, just merely scandal. They are always predicting the greatest catastrophes, and they seem to enjoy the most profound security. In a word, they are as empty and shallow as fickleness, as weakness itself; and in the midst of these troubled spirits and of these threadbare convictions, I love this old Marchioness, so frank in her antipathies and so nobly inaccessible to compromise. I seem to see a personage of another century, a sort of female Duke de Saint-Simon, guarding the respect of rank as a religion, and understanding nothing of the power of money against which feeble or

hypocritical protests are made around her.

And as far as I am concerned, you know the contempt of money goes a good way. Our misfortunes have not changed me, for I do not call by the name of money that sacred thing, the salary which I now earn here proudly and even with a little haughtiness. That is duty, a guaranty of honor. Luxury itself, when it is the continuation or the recompense of an elevated life, does not inspire me with the philosophic disdain which always conceals a trifle of envy; but wealth coveted, hunted up and down, bought at the price of ambitious marriages, by the unwinding of political conscience, by family intrigues about successions, — these are what justly wear the villanous name of money, and on that point I agree heartily with the Marchioness, who has no pardon for interested and ill-suited marriages, and for all other insipid things, whether private or public.

That is why the Marchioness without regret and without dread sees all that she possesses fall day by day into a gulf. I have already said something to you about that. I told you that the Duke d'Aléria, her elder son, ruined her, while the younger, the Marquis, the son of her last husband, came to her support with tender respect, and again placed her upon a very comfortable footing.

I must now speak of these two gentlemen, of whom I have yet told you but a few words. I have seen the Marquis from the first day of my installation here. Every morning from noon to one o'clock, and every evening from eleven till midnight, he passes with his mother. Besides, he dines with her quite frequently. I have therefore had time to observe him, and I imagine that I already know him tolerably well. He is a young man who appears to me to have had no youth. His health is delicate, and his mind, which is cultivated and elevated, is engaged in a struggle against some secret grief, or a natural tendency to sadness. He could not have an external appearance less striking at first sight, and exciting more sympathy in proportion to the degree

in which his face reveals itself. He is neither tall nor short, neither handsome nor homely. There is nothing negligent or studied in his style of dress. He seems to have an instinctive aversion to everything which might draw attention to the person. Yet one sees very soon that he is no ordinary man. The few words which he says to you have a deep or delicate meaning, and his eyes, when they lose the perplexity of a certain shyness, are so handsome, so good, so intelligent, that I do not believe I ever met their equals.

His conduct toward his mother is admirable and paints him at full length. I saw him pay out several millions, all his personal fortune, to discharge the rash debts of the elder son, and he never frowned, never said a word, never showed any vexation or regret. The weaker she was toward this ungrateful and graceless son, the more tender and devoted and respectful was the Marquis. You see it is impossible not to esteem this man, and, as for me, I feel a sort of veneration for him.

His conversation, too, is very agreeable. He scarcely speaks at all in society; but in intimacy, when the first reserve is worn off, he talks charmingly. He is not only a cultivated man, he is a well of science. I believe he has read everything, for upon whatever subject you suggest, he is interesting, and proves that he has sounded it to the bottom. His conversation is so necessary to his mother, that when anything prevents his accustomed visit or lessens its duration, she is restless, and, as it were, out of her reckoning for the remainder of the day.

At first, as soon as I saw him come in the morning, I took it upon myself to retire, and I did so the more readily, seeing that this superior and therefore excessively modest man appeared embarrassed by my presence. It was doing me great honor, to be sure; but at the end of three or four days he had so far regained his tranquillity as to ask me very kindly why he put me to flight. I should not have believed myself authorized by that to restrain the confidential freedom of the son and mother; but she herself begged me to stay, even insisting upon it, and she afterward

gave me with her habitual frankness her reason for so doing. And here is that reason, which is a little singular:—

“My son is of a melancholy spirit,” she said; “that, however, is not my character. I am very much depressed or very animated, never dreamy, and dreaminess in others irritates me a little. In my son it troubles or afflicts me. I have never been able to resign myself to it. When we are alone together it requires constant effort on my part to keep him from falling into his reveries. When we are surrounded by fifteen or twenty persons of an evening, he gives himself up to his thoughts without restraint, and frequently maintains a complete reserve. To enjoy the full flavor of his mind, which is my peculiar pleasure and greatest happiness, nothing is more favorable than the presence of a third person, especially if that third person is one of merit. The Marquis then takes the trouble to be charming, at first out of politeness and then little by little out of a fastidious desire to please, though he may not suspect it himself. In fact, he is a man who needs to be drawn away from his own reflections, and he is so perfect to me that I have not the right or the wish to enter upon this contest openly, while the presence of a person, who even without saying anything is supposed to listen, forces him to exert himself; seeing that, if he fears to appear a pedant by speaking too much, he fears still more to appear affected when he forgets himself in thought. So, my dear, you will do us both a great service in not leaving us too much alone.”

“Nevertheless, Madame,” I answered, “if you should have private matters to speak about, how shall I know?”

Thereupon she promised that in such a case she would give me notice by asking me *if the clock is not slow*.

III.

CONTINUATION OF THE LETTER TO MADAME HEUDEBERT.

I go on with my letter which sleep forced me to leave off last night, and, as it is only nine o'clock and as I do

not see the Marchioness before noon, I have all the intervening time to complete the details which will be necessary to post you as to my situation.

But it seems to me that I have described the Marquis to you sufficiently, and that you can now very well represent him to yourself. To answer all your questions, I am going to tell you how my days are passed.

The first fortnight was a little hard, I confess, now that I have obtained a very necessary modification of my duties. You know how much need I have of exercise, and how active I have been for the last six years; but here, alas! I have no house to keep in order and to run over from top to bottom a hundred times a day, no child to walk with and to make play, not even a dog with which I can run, under the pretext of amusing it. The Marchioness has a horror of animals; she goes out but once or twice a week to ride up and down the avenue of the Champs-Élysées. She calls that taking exercise. Infirm and unable to go up stairs, except with the aid of a servant's arm, — a thing dreadful enough to her, for she was once let fall in doing it, — she pays no visits, though she passes her life in receiving them. All the activity, all the vigor of her existence, is in her head, and much in her speech; she talks remarkably well and she knows it; but she is not on that account guilty of any weak vanity, and thinks less of making herself heard than of venting the ideas and sentiments which agitate her.

She has, you see, an energetic nature and a singular earnestness in her opinions of all things, even of those which seem to me of very little account. She could never be quite happy; she has been seeking to be so too long; and living with her incessantly is tiresome, in spite of the attraction which she exercises. Her hands are perfectly idle; nevertheless her sight is sharp and her fingers are still nimble, for she plays tolerably upon the piano; but she eschews everything that interferes with talking and no longer asks me to read or to play. She says that she holds my talents in reserve for the country, where she finds herself more alone and

whither we are to go in two months. I look forward to this change with real pleasure, as here the life of the body is too much suppressed. And then the good Marchioness has the habit of living in a temperature of Senegal, besides covering herself with perfumes, and her apartment is filled with the most odorous of flowers; they are very beautiful to see, but in the absence of air, it is not so easy a thing to breathe.

Moreover I have to be idle, like her. I tried at first to embroider while with her; that, I saw very soon, disturbed her nerves. She asked me if I was working by the day, if there was any hurry for what I was doing, if it was very useful, and she interrupted a dozen times with no other motive than to see me stop the work which annoyed her. At last I had to abandon it altogether or it would have thrown her into a fit of illness. She was well pleased at this, and in order to insure herself against a renewal of the attempt on my part, she gave me a very frank exposition of her way of thinking in such matters. She holds that women who busy their hands and eyes with needlework put a great deal more of their minds into it than they are themselves willing to acknowledge. It is, according to her, a way of stultifying one's self in order to escape the tedium of existence. She does not understand it except in the hands of unhappy persons and of prisoners. And then she sweetened the draught for me by adding that this sort of work gave me the appearance of a lady's maid and that she wished me to be in the eyes of all her visitors her companion and her friend. So she puts me forward in conversation, referring to me frequently in order to force me to "show my intelligence," — what I am especially careful not to do, for I feel that I have none at all when people are looking at me and listening to me.

I do my best, however, not to sit stolidly motionless, and I regret deeply that my old friend — since my friend she really is — does not consent to receive from me the most trifling service; she even rings for her maid to pick up her pocket-handkerchief, unless I hasten to seize it, and yet she reproaches me with

devoting myself to her too much, not perceiving that I suffer for the want of something to which I can devote myself.

You may ask why, therefore, she has taken me into her service; I will tell you: she does not receive before four o'clock, and up to that time — that is, as soon as the Marquis leaves her — she hears the reading of the newspapers and attends to her correspondence; it is I, then, who read and write for her. Why she does not read and write herself, I am sure I do not know, for she is very able to do both. I think, however, I can see that she cannot endure solitude, and that the dread with which it inspires her cannot be counteracted by any occupation whatever. Certainly there is in her something strange which does not appear, but which exists in the secret places of her heart or head. Hers is perhaps a nature a little perverted by the relations it has been forced to sustain toward others. It is too late to teach her to be busy, and perhaps she cannot even think when she is alone.

It is certain that when I enter her apartment at the stroke of noon I find her very different from what I left her the night before in the midst of her drawing-room. She seems to grow ten years older every night. I know that her maids make a long toilet for her, during which she does not speak a single word to them, for she has a great contempt for people whose language is vulgar. She becomes so annoyed by the presence of these poor women (perhaps she has been sleepless, which also annoys her desperately), that she appears half dead and is frightfully pale when I first see her; but at the end of ten minutes this is no longer the case; she becomes thoroughly waked up, and by the time the Marquis arrives she has regained the ten years of the night.

Her correspondence, of which I ought to say nothing, although there is not the least secret about it, is by no means a necessity of her position or of her interests. It merely gratifies her need to talk with her absent friends. It is, she says, a manner of speaking, of exchanging ideas, which varies the only pleasure she knows, namely, that of being in

continual communication with the minds of others.

So be it! but, for my part, that would not be my taste, if I were troubled with leisure. I would please myself only with those I loved, and certainly the Marchioness cannot love very much the forty or fifty persons to whom she writes, and the two or three hundred whom she receives every week.

My taste, however, does not come into the question, and I will not criticise her to whom I have given my liberty. That would be cowardly, for, after all, if I did not esteem or respect her, I should be free to betake myself elsewhere. Besides, supposing my respect and esteem are cumbered by the endurance of certain eccentricities, — as I might everywhere meet with eccentricities, and probably worse things, — I do not see why I should look with a magnifying-glass upon those which I want to put up with cheerfully and philosophically. Then, dear sister, if I have happened to blame or ridicule any one or anything here, take it as having escaped me inadvertently, and believe that with you I have not cared to restrain myself; for, be assured, nothing troubles me or gives me any real suffering.

The gist of all this is that in the soul of the Marchioness there is something strong, warm, and therefore sincere, which really attaches me to her and causes me to accept without the least repugnance the task of diverting her and keeping her cheerful. I know very well, whatever she may say, that I am something much worse than an attendant; I am a slave; but I am so by my own will, and therefore I feel in my conscience as free as the air. What is freer than the spirit of a captive, or of one proscribed for his faith?

I had not reflected upon all this when I left you, my sister; I believed that I would have to suffer a great deal. Well, I have reflected upon it now, and, save the want of exercise, which is altogether a physical matter, I have not suffered at all. That little suffering will be spared me hereafter; do not torment yourself about it. I was forced to acknowledge it to you. Henceforth I shall be permitted to go to sleep early

enough, and I can walk in the garden of the hotel, which is not large, but in which I succeed in going a good way, while thinking of you and our wide fields. Then I imagine myself there, with you and the children around me, — a beautiful dream, which does me good.

But I perceive that I have told you nothing yet of the Duke; I now come to that subject.

It was no more than three days ago that I finally got sight of him. I will confess that I was not very impatient to see him. I could not help feeling a sort of horror of the man who has ruined his mother, and who, it is said, is adorned with every vice. Well, my surprise was very great, and if my aversion to his character abides, I am forced to say that his person is not, as I had pictured it, disagreeable to me.

In my dread I had endowed him with claws and horns. Nevertheless, you shall see how I approached this demon without recognizing him. I must tell you first that nothing could be more irregular than his relations with his mother. There are weeks, months even, in which he comes to see her almost every day; then he disappears, is not spoken of for months or weeks, and when he appears again there is no more explanation on one side or the other than if he had gone away the night before. I do not know yet how the Marchioness takes this. I have sometimes heard her mention her eldest son as calmly and respectfully as if she were speaking of the Marquis, and you may well suppose that I have never permitted myself to ask the least question upon a subject so delicate. She merely related once in my presence, but without any sort of comment, what I have just told you about the capricious irregularity of his visits.

I had indeed expected him sooner or later to make some sudden or mysterious appearance, but I was not thinking at all of him when, entering the drawing-room after dinner, as I usually do, to see that everything is arranged to suit the Marchioness, I did not notice a personage quietly installed there in a corner upon a small sofa. When the Marchioness has dined she

returns to her apartment, where her maids ply her with a little white and rouge, and she remains there a quarter of an hour, while I inspect the lamps and flower-stands of the drawing-room. I was therefore absorbed in that grave duty, and profiting by the chance to give myself a little exercise, I moved to and fro very quickly, singing one of our home songs, when I found myself confronted by a pair of large blue eyes of unusual clearness. I bowed, asking pardon. The owner of the eyes arose, apologizing in turn, and, left to do the honors, but not knowing what to say to a new face which seemed to be asking me who I was, I chose the part of saying nothing at all.

The man having attained his feet, turned his back to the mantel-piece, and followed me with his eyes with an air of kindness rather than astonishment. He is tall, somewhat heavy-made, with a large face, and — what is most surprising — very attractive features. He could not have a sweeter, a more humane, even a more candid expression; the tone of his voice is subdued and tender, and there are in his pronunciation, as in his manners, the unmistakable marks of high-breeding. I will say even that there is a certain suavity in the slightest movements of this rattle-snake, and that his smile is like a child's.

Do you begin to understand something of the truth? For my part I was so far from suspecting it that I went nearer to the mantel-piece, feeling myself drawn thither, as it were, by the kindness with which he regarded me, and I stood ready to reply in the most affable manner if he should feel inclined to speak to me. He appeared desirous to begin, and did so very frankly.

"Is Mlle. Esther ill?" he asked in his soft voice and with a very polite intonation.

"Mlle. Esther has not been here for two months," I answered. "I never knew her. It is I who have taken her place."

"O no!"

"Pardon me."

"Say that you have succeeded her! Spring does not take the place of winter; it causes it to be forgotten."

"Winter can nevertheless have good in it."

"O, you did not know Esther! She was sharp as the north-wind of December, and when she came near you you felt the approach of rheumatism!"

Then he went into a description of the poor Esther which was very lively, though not at all malicious, and it was altogether so droll that I could not restrain a burst of laughter.

"That's right!" he rejoined; "but do you laugh? Then we shall hear laughter here! I hope you laugh often?"

"Certainly, when there is a good occasion."

"There never was a good occasion for Esther. After all she was right: if she had laughed she would have shown her teeth. Ah! but do not hide yours. I have seen them, and yet I shall say nothing about them. I know nothing sillier than compliments. Would it be impertinent to ask your name? But no; do not tell me it. I guessed Esther's: I baptized her Rebecca. You see that I detected the race. I want to guess yours."

"Come, then, guess."

"Well, a very French name, — Louise, Blanche, Charlotte?"

"That's it; my name is Caroline."

"There! you see — and you come from one of the provinces?"

"From the country."

"But see! why have n't you red hands? Do you like it here in Paris?"

"No, not at all."

"I will lay a wager your relatives have compelled you —"

"No, no one has compelled me."

"But you find it tedious here? Confess now that you do."

"O no; I never find it tedious anywhere."

"You are no longer frank."

"I assure you I am."

"You are then very reasonable?"

"I pride myself on being so."

"And positive, perhaps?"

"No."

"Romantic, though?"

"Still less."

"What then?"

"Nothing."

"How nothing?"

"Nothing that merits the slightest attention. I can read, write, and reckon. I thrum a little on the piano. I am very obedient. I am conscientious in the discharge of my duties, and that is all it is important that I should be here."

"Well, now, you do not know yourself. Do you want me to tell you what you are? You are a person of intelligence and an excellent soul."

"You believe so?"

"I am sure of it. I see very quickly, and I judge tolerably well. And you? Do you form an idea of people at first sight?"

"O yes, more or less."

"Well, then, what do you think of me, for example?"

"Naturally I think of you what you think of me."

"Is that out of gratitude or of politeness?"

"No, it is from a sort of instinct."

"Indeed? I thank you for it. Now I will tell you what really gives me pleasure: not brightness of mind, by any means; almost everybody can have that; it can at least in a measure be acquired; but thorough goodness, — you do not think me very bad, do you? Then, — come, will you let me take your hand?"

"What for?"

"I will tell you directly. Do you refuse me? There is nothing more honest in the world than the sentiment which causes me to ask that favor of you."

There was something so true and so touching in the face and accent of this man, that, in spite of the strangeness of his demand and the still greater strangeness of my consent, I put my hand in his with confidence. He pressed it gently, detaining it but a second; but tears came to his eyes and he faltered as if with suffocation, "Thanks; take good care of my poor mother!"

And I, comprehending at last that this was the Duke d'Aléria, and that I had just been touching the hand of this soulless profligate, this undutiful son, this heartless brother, in a word this man without restraint or conscience, I felt my limbs giving way under me and I leaned upon the table, becoming so

exceedingly pale that he noticed it, and made a movement toward sustaining me, while he exclaimed, "What! are you ill?"

But he paused when he perceived the dread and disgust with which he inspired me, or perhaps merely because his mother was just entering the room. She saw my trouble, and looked at the Duke as if to demand of him the cause. He answered only by kissing her hand in the most tender and respectful manner, and by asking the news about herself. I immediately retired, as much to collect myself as to leave them alone together.

When I re-entered the drawing-room several persons had arrived, and I entered into conversation with a certain Madame de D——, who is particularly kind to me, and who appears to be an excellent woman. She cannot, however, endure the Duke, and it is she who has told me all the evil I know of him. A feeling of reaction against the sympathy with which he had inspired me caused me, no doubt, to seek now the society of this lady.

"Well," she said, as if she had divined what was passing in me, while she regarded the Duke, then engaged in conversation not far from his mother, "you have at last seen him, the 'beloved child'? What have you to say of him?"

"He is amiable and handsome, and that is what in my eyes condemns him all the more."

"Yes, is it not so? His is certainly a fine organization, and it is incredible that he should be so well preserved and so intellectually bright after the life he has led; but do not go to trusting him. He is the most corrupt being that exists, and he is perfectly able to play the good apostle with you in order to compromise you."

"With me? O no! The humbleness of my position will preserve me from his attention."

"Not at all. You will see. I will not tell you that your merit raises you above your position, since that is evident to everybody; but to know that you are honest will be enough to inspire him with a desire to lead you astray."

"Do not attempt to frighten me; I would not stay here an hour, Madame, if I thought I were going to be insulted."

"No, no; that is not what you need apprehend. He is always gentlemanly in the society of gentle and pure people, and you will never have to guard yourself from any impropriety on his part. Quite the contrary; if you are not careful, he will persuade you that he is a repentant angel, perhaps even a saint in disguise, and — you will be his dupe."

Madame de D—— said these last words in a compassionate tone which wounded me. I was going to reply, but I remembered what I had heard another old lady say, namely, that a daughter of Madame de D—— had been very much compromised by the Duke. The poor woman must suffer horribly at the sight of him, and I thus explain to myself how a person so indulgent toward all the world speaks of him with such bitterness; but I do not so easily explain to myself why, in spite of her repugnance at seeing him and hearing him named, she speaks of him to me with a sort of insistence every time she can get me aside. One would indeed think that I were destined to be taken in the snares of this Lovelace, and that she sought her revenge in disputing my poor soul with him.

A moment of reflection led me to regard her excessive fear as a trifle ridiculous, and wishing neither to make her angry with me nor to remind her of her own griefs, I have from that moment avoided speaking of her enemy. Besides, the Duke did not say another word to me that evening, and since that evening he has not made his appearance. If I am in any *danger* I have not perceived it yet; but you can be as much at rest on that subject as I am myself, for I have not the least fear of people whom I do not esteem.

In the rest of the letter Caroline treats of other persons and circumstances that had more or less excited her attention. As those details do not connect directly with our story, we suppress them now, though expecting our narrative to lead us back to them.

IV.

ABOUT this time Caroline received a letter which touched her deeply, and which we will transcribe without giving the incorrect spelling and punctuation, that would indeed make it difficult to read.

My dear Caroline, — permit your poor nurse always to address you this way, — I have just learned from your elder sister, who has done me the favor of writing me, that you have left her house to become the companion of a lady in Paris. I cannot describe the pain it gives me to think that a person like you, born to ease, as I know, should be obliged to be subject to others, and when I think that it is all of your own good heart, and to help Camille and her children, the tears come to my eyes. My dear young lady, I have only one thing to say, and that is, thanks to the generosity of your parents, that I am not among the most unfortunate. My husband is pretty well off, and carries on besides a small business, which has enabled us to buy a house and a bit of land. My son is a soldier, and your foster-sister has married quite well. So if you should be in want of a few hundred francs some day or other, we should be happy to lend them to you, for any length of time and without interest. By accepting this offer, you will honor and please persons who have always loved you; for my husband esteems you very much, though he knows you only through me, and he often says to me, "She ought to come to us; we could keep her as long as she liked, and as she is strong and a good walker, we could show her our mountains. If she would, she might, too, be the school-mistress of our village; this would not bring her in much, to be sure; but then her expenses would be small, and it would amount, perhaps, to the same as her salary in Paris, where living is so dear." I tell you this just exactly as Peyraque says it, and if your own heart will say the same, we shall have a neat little room all ready for you, and a somewhat wild country to show you. You will not feel afraid, — for when you were a very little thing even, you were

always wanting to climb everywhere, so that your poor papa would call you his little squirrel.

Remember then, if you are not comfortable where you are, dear Caroline of my heart, that in a little corner of what is to you an unknown country there are those who know you for the best soul in the wide world, and who pray for you every night and morning, asking the good God to bring you here to see us.

JUSTINE LANION,
PEYRAQUE by marriage.

LANTRIAC, near LE PUY, HAUTE LOIRE.

Caroline replied immediately, as follows : —

"My good Justine, my dear friend, — I wept while reading your letter. They were tears of joy and gratitude. How happy I am to find your friendship as tender as it was on the day when we parted from one another, fourteen years ago! That day lingers in my memory as one of the saddest in my whole life. I had learned to know no mother but you, and losing you was being left motherless for the second time. My good nurse, you loved me so much that for me you had almost forgotten your good husband and your dear children! But they recalled you, your first duty was to them, and I saw from all your letters that they were making you happy. It was they who paid you my debt, for I owed you a great deal; and I have often thought that, if there is anything good or reasonable in me, it is because I have been treated lovingly, gently, and reasonably by her whom my childish eyes first learned to know. Now you want to offer me your savings, you dear good soul! That is good and motherly, like you, and on the part of your husband, who does not know me, it is great and noble. I thank you tenderly, my kind friends, but I need nothing. I am well provided for where I am, and I am as happy as I can be away from my own dear family.

"I shall not give up the hope of going to see you, all the same. What you tell me about the neat little room and the fine wild country gives me a strong desire to know your village and your little household. I cannot say

when, in the course of my life, I shall find a fortnight of liberty ; but be assured that if I ever do find it, it shall be at the disposal of my darling nurse, whom I embrace with all my heart."

While Caroline was giving herself up to this frank outburst of feeling, the Duke, Gaëtan d'Aléria, in a splendid Turkish morning costume, was conversing with his brother, the Marquis, from whom he was receiving a morning call in his elegant apartments on the Rue de la Paix.

They had just been speaking of business matters, and a lively discussion had arisen between the two brothers. "No, my friend," said the Duke, in a firm tone, "I will be energetic this time : I refuse your signature ; you shall not pay my debts !"

"I will pay them," rejoined the Marquis, in a tone just as resolute. "It must be done ; I ought to do it. I had some hesitation, I will not deny, before knowing the sum-total, and your pride need not suffer from the scruples I felt. I was afraid of becoming involved beyond my ability ; but I know now that there will be enough left to maintain our mother comfortably. I have, therefore, determined to save the honor of the family, and you cannot stand in the way."

"I do stand in the way : you do not owe me this sacrifice ; we do not bear the same name."

"We are the sons of the same mother, and I do not want her to die of grief and shame at seeing you insolvent."

"I have no more desire for such a disgrace than my mother has. I will marry."

"For money ? In my mother's eyes, and in mine, as well as in yours, my brother, that would be worse still, — you know it perfectly well !"

"Well, then, I will accept a place."

"Worse, still worse !"

"No, there is nothing worse for me than the pain of ruining you."

"I shall not be ruined."

"And may I not know the whole amount of my debts ?"

"It is of no use ; enough that you have pledged your word that there is none unknown to the notary, who has charge of the settlement. I have only

requested you to be so good as to look over some of these papers to prove their correctness, if that be possible. You have verified them ; that is enough, the rest does not concern you."

The Duke crumpled the papers angrily, and strode about the room, unable to find words for his mental distress. Then he lighted a cigar which he did not smoke, threw himself into an arm-chair and became very pale. The Marquis understood the suffering of his brother's pride, and perhaps of his conscience.

"Calm yourself," he said. "I sympathize with your sorrow ; but it is a good sign, and I trust to the future. Forget this service, which I am doing for my mother rather than for you ; but do not forget that whatever is left is henceforth hers. Consider that we may yet have the happiness of keeping her with us a long while, and that she needs not necessarily suffer. Farewell. I will see you again in an hour, to arrange the last details."

"Yes, yes, leave me alone," replied the Duke ; "you see that I cannot say a word to you now."

As soon as the Marquis was gone the Duke rang, gave orders that no one should be admitted, and began to pace the room as before, with desperate agitation. In this hour, he was passing through the supreme and inevitable crisis of his destiny. In none of his other disasters had he seen so much of his own guilt or felt so much real concern.

Up to this time, in fact, he had squandered his own fortune with that hardy recklessness which arises from the sense of injuring no one but one's self. He had, so to speak, only made use of a right ; then, half without his own knowledge, by encroaching upon his mother's capital, he had consumed it entirely, becoming gradually hardened to the disgrace of throwing upon his brother the duty of maintaining her from his own resources. Let us say all that we can in excuse of the Duke's conduct up to this period. He had been fearfully spoiled ; in his mother's heart a very marked preference for him had existed ; nature, too, had been partial to him ; taller, stronger, more ele-

gant, more brilliant, and apparently more active than his brother, and more demonstratively affectionate from childhood, he had seemed to every one the better endowed and the more amiable of the two. For a long while weakly and taciturn, the Marquis had shown no fondness for anything but study; and this taste, which in a plebeian would have seemed a great advantage, was considered eccentric in a man of rank. This tendency was therefore repressed rather than encouraged, and precisely on that account it became a passion, — an absorbing, pent-up passion, which developed in the young man's soul a quick, inward sensibility and an enthusiasm all the more ardent from having been restrained. The Marquis was far more affectionate than his brother, and yet passed for a man of cold nature, while the Duke, always kindly and communicative, without loving any one exclusively, had long passed for the very soul of warmth.

The Duke inherited from his father the impulsive temperament which had proved so delusive, and during his childhood the wild freedom of his ways had given the Marchioness some anxiety. We have mentioned already that after the death of her second husband she had been very much carried away by grief, and that for more than a year she had shrunk from seeing her children. When this moral disease gave place to natural feeling, her first effort was to clasp in her arms the son of the husband whom she had loved. But the child, surprised and perhaps terrified by the impetuosity of caresses which he had almost forgotten, burst into tears without knowing why. It may have been the vague, instinctive reproach of a nature chilled by neglect. The Duke, older than he by three years, but more easily diverted, perceived nothing of all this. He returned his mother's kisses, and the poor woman imagined that he inherited her own warm heart, while the Marquis, she thought, had the traits of his paternal grandfather, a man of letters, but not quite sane. So the Duke was secretly preferred, though not more kindly treated, for the Marchioness had a deep and almost religious sense of justice; but he was petted

more, since he alone, she believed, appreciated the value of a carcass.

Urbain (the Marquis) felt this partiality and suffered from it; but he never allowed himself to complain, and perhaps, already putting a just estimate upon his brother, he did not care to contend with him on such frivolous grounds.

In the course of time, the Marchioness found out that she had been greatly mistaken, and that sentiments should be judged by deeds rather than by words; but the habit of spoiling her prodigal son had now become fixed, and to this she soon added a tender pity for the bewildered perversity which seemed to be leading the wilful youth to his own destruction. This perversity, however, did not take its rise in an evil heart. Vanity at first, and dissipation afterward, then the loss of energy, and at last the tyranny of vice, — that, briefly, is the history of this man, charming without real refinement, good without grandeur of soul, sceptical without atheism. At the age when we are describing him, there was in him an awful void in the place where his conscience should have been, and yet it was a conscience rather absent than dead. There would sometimes be returns of it, and struggles with it, fewer and briefer indeed than they had been in his youth, but perhaps on that account all the more desperate; and the one which was going on within him at this time was so cruel that he laid his hand repeatedly upon one of his splendid weapons, as if he were haunted by the spectre of suicide; but he thought of his mother, pushed away the pistols and locked them up, putting both hands to his head, in the fear that he was becoming insane.

He had always looked upon money as nothing. His mother's noble disinterested theories on the subject had made the way of false reasoning easy to him. Nevertheless he understood that, in effecting his mother's ruin, he had overstepped his right. He was astounded; he had gone on up to the last, promising himself that he would stop before reaching his brother's fortune, and then he had seriously encroached upon it; but the truth is, that he had

not done this knowingly ; for, from motives of delicacy, the Marquis had kept no accounts with him in matters of detail, and would never have mentioned them at all, had it not been for the necessity of preserving by an appeal to his honor the little which was left. The Duke therefore did not feel himself guilty of deliberate selfishness, and had reproached Urbain warmly and sincerely for not having warned him sooner. He saw at last the abyss opened by his lawless and reckless conduct ; he was bitterly ashamed of having injured his brother's prospects and of having no way to repair the harm, without infringing upon certain rigid principles established by his mother and his education.

Yet this error was less serious than that of having wronged his own mother ; but it did not appear so to the Duke. It had always seemed to him that whatever belonged to his mother was his own, while in dealing with his brother his pride kept up the distinction of *meum* and *tuum*. Besides, — should it not be admitted ? — while there was no wicked dislike between the two brothers so differently constituted, there was at least a want of confidence and sympathy. The life of the one was a continual protest against that of the other. Urbain had made a silent but powerful effort that the voice of nature within him might be also that of friendship. Gaëtan had made no such effort ; trusting to the freedom from malice which characterized him, he had felt at liberty to rail at the austerity of the Marquis. They were then together most of the time, upon a footing of blame delicately restrained by the one, and of ridicule manifested in easy revolt by the other.

"Very well," exclaimed the Duke, seeing the Marquis return. "It is an accomplished fact then ? I see by your face that you have been signing."

"Yes, brother," replied Urbain ; "it is all arranged, and there is left for you besides an income of twelve thousand francs, which I did not allow them to use in the liquidation."

"Left for me ?" rejoined Gaëtan, looking him in the face. "No ! you are deceived, there is nothing left for

me ; but, after having cleared me of debt, you are yourself making me an allowance."

"Well, yes," replied the Marquis, "since you must also learn, sooner or later, that you are not at liberty to dispose of the principal."

The Duke, who had not yet decided upon anything, wrung his hands with violence and fell back upon his mute opposition. The Marquis made an effort to conquer his habitual reserve, seated himself near Gaëtan, and taking in his own the clenched hands which seemed hesitating to extend themselves to him, "My friend," said he, "you are too haughty with me. Would you not have done for me what I am doing for you ?"

The Duke felt his pride breaking down. He burst into tears. "No !" said he, pressing his brother's hand feelingly, "I never should have known how to do it. I never could have done it, for my destiny is to injure others, and I shall never have the happiness of saving any one."

"You will at least admit that it is a happiness," replied Urbain. "Then consider yourself doing me a kindness, and give me back your friendship which seems to be vanishing under this grievance."

"Urbain," cried the Duke, "you speak of my friendship. Now would be the time to thank you with all manner of protestations, but I will not do it ; I will never fall so low as to take refuge in hypocrisy. Do you know, brother, that I have never liked you very well ?"

"I know it, and I account for it by our differing tastes and dispositions ; but has not the time now come to like each other better ?"

"Ah ! it is an awful time for that, — the hour of your triumph and of my disgrace. Tell me that, but for my mother, you would have let me succumb. Yes, you must tell me that, and then I may forgive you for what you are doing."

"Have I not already said so ?"

"Tell me so again ! You hesitate ? It is then a question of the family honor ?"

"Yes, it is that precisely, the family honor is in question."

"And you do not expect me to love you to-day more than on any other day?"

"I know," rejoined the Marquis, sadly, "that personally I am not made to be loved."

The Duke felt himself completely conquered; he threw himself into his brother's arms. "Come!" he cried, "forgive me. You are a better man than I. I respect you, admire you, I almost worship you; I know, I feel that you are my best friend. My God! what is there that I can do for you? Do you love any woman? Shall I kill her husband? Do you want me to go to China and find some precious manuscript, in some pagoda, risking the *cangue*, and other pleasant things?"

"You think of nothing but a discharge of obligations, Gaëtan. If you would only love me a little, I should be already paid a hundred times over."

"Well, then, I do love you with all my heart," replied the Duke, embracing him violently; "and you see I am weeping like a child. Look here! Give me a little esteem in return; I will reform. I am still young. Why, the devil take it all, at thirty-six one can't have been ruined altogether! A fellow is only a little used up. I will turn over a new leaf, — all the more because that is needed in my case. Well, then, so much the better! I will renew my youth, my health. I will go and pass the summer with you and my mother in the country; I will tell you stories; I will make you laugh again. Come! help me lay my plans, support me, lift me up, console me; for, after all, I don't know where I am, and I feel very unhappy."

The Marquis had already noticed, without appearing to do so, the disappearance of the weapons which had been in sight an hour before. He had also read in his brother's face the fearful crisis through which he had passed. He knew furthermore that Gaëtan's moral courage would only bear a certain amount of strain. "Dress yourself now," he said, "and come to breakfast with me. We will chat; we will build air-castles. Who knows but I may convince you that, in certain cases, we begin to be rich on the very day we become poor?"

V.

THE Marquis conducted his brother to the Bois de Boulogne, which at that period was not a splendid English garden, but a charming grove of dreamy shade. It was one of the first days of April; the weather was magnificent; the thickets were covered with violets, and a thousand foolish tomtits were chattering around the first buds, while the citron-hued butterflies of those early beautiful days seemed, by their form, their color, and their undecided flight, like new leaves fluttering gently in the wind.

The Marquis was ordinarily thought to take his meals at home. In reality, he did not take his meals at all, using those terms after the manner of generous livers. He had a few very simple dishes served up, and he swallowed them hastily, without raising his eyes from the book at his side. That frugal habit agreed very well with the rule of strict economy which he was now about to adopt; for, in order that his mother's table might continue to be carefully and abundantly served, it was necessary that his own should not in the future be allowed the least superfluity.

Not only anxious to conceal this fact from his brother, but fearing, also, to sadden him by the usual austerity of his mode of life, the Marquis led him to a pavilion in the Bois and ordered a comfortable repast, saying to himself that he would buy so many books the less, and frequent the public libraries by necessity, neither more nor less than a needy scholar. He felt himself in no way saddened or appalled by a succession of little sacrifices. He did not think even of his delicate health, which demanded a certain amount of comforts in his sedentary life. He was happy at having finally broken down the cold barrier between himself and Gaëtan, and also at the prospect of gaining his confidence and affection. The Duke, who was still pale and nervously thoughtful, began to yield himself up more and more to the influence of the spring air which entered freely through the open window. The meal restored the equilibrium of his faculties, for he was of a robust nature, that could not

endure privation ; and his mother, who had certain pretensions of alliance to the ex-royal family, was in the habit of saying, somewhat vainly, that the Duke had the fine appetite of the Bourbons.

In the course of an hour the Duke was charming in his manner toward his brother ; that is, he was with him, for the first time in his life, as amiable and as much at his ease as he was with everybody else. These two men had sometimes perhaps divined more or less of each other, but a thorough understanding had never been reached ; and, surely, they had never questioned each other openly. The Marquis had been restrained by discretion ; the Duke by indifference. Now the Duke felt a real need to know the man who had just rescued his honor and made him certain of his future. He questioned the Marquis with a freedom which had never before had place between them.

"Explain your happiness to me," he said, "for you are really happy ; at least, I have never heard you complain."

The Marquis made a reply which astonished him greatly. "I cannot explain to you my courage," he said, "except by my devotion to my mother and by my love for study, since, as for happiness, I never had it and never shall have it. That, perhaps, is not what I should say to allure you to a quiet and retired life ; but I would commit a crime not to be sincere with you ; and besides, I shall never make myself a pretender to virtue, though you have slightly accused me of that eccentricity."

"It is true ; I was very wrong ; I see it now. But how and why are you unhappy, my poor brother ? Can you tell me ?"

"I cannot tell you, but I will confide in you. I have loved !"

"You ? you have loved a woman ? When was that ?"

"It is now a long time ago, and I loved her a long time."

"And you do not love her any more ?"

"She is dead."

"She was a married woman ?"

"Precisely, and her husband is yet

living. You will permit me to conceal her name."

"There is no need whatever to mention that ; but you will conquer this feeling, will you not ?"

"I do not positively know. Up to the present time I have not succeeded at all."

"She has not been dead long ?"

"Three years."

"She loved you then very much ?"

"No."

"How, no ?"

"She loved me as much as a woman can love who ought not and will not break with her husband."

"Bah ! that's no reason ; on the contrary, obstacles stimulate passion."

"And they wear it out. She was weary with deceiving, and consequently of suffering. It was only the fear of driving me to despair that hindered her from breaking with me. I was greatly wanting in courage. She died a suffering death, — and through my fault !"

"But no, O no ! You imagine that to torment yourself."

"I imagine nothing, and my grief is without resource, as my fault is without excuse. You shall see. There came one of those paroxysms of passion in which we wish, in spite of God and men, to appropriate forever the object of our love. She bore me a son whom I saved, concealed, and who still lives ; but she, not wishing to give a foothold to suspicion, made her appearance in society the day after her delivery. There she seemed still beautiful, and full of her wonted animation ; she spoke and walked, notwithstanding the fever which was devouring her : twenty-four hours afterwards she was a corpse. Nothing was ever known. She passed for the most rigid person —"

"I know who it was, — Madame de G——."

"Yes, you alone in the whole world possess the secret."

"Ah ! Do not be so sure. Does not our mother herself suspect it ?"

"Our mother suspects nothing."

The Duke was silent for a moment, then he said with a sigh, "My poor brother, this child that is living, and that you probably cherish —"

"Certainly."

"And I have ruined him too."

"What matter? If he has the means of learning to work, of being a man, it will be all that I desire for him. I can never recognize him openly, and for some years I do not wish to have him near me. He is very frail; I am having him brought up in the country, at the house of some peasants. He must get the physical strength which I have always lacked, and whose absence has, perhaps, induced in me the want of moral force. Then, too, at the last hour, from an imprudent word of the physician, M. de G—— gained a suspicion of the truth. It would not do to have about me a child whose age should coincide with the time which has intervened since that sad event. Do you not see, Gaëtan, I am not, I cannot be, happy?"

"Is it then that passion which keeps you from marrying?"

"I shall never marry; I have sworn it."

"Very well, now you must think of it."

"And *you* preach marriage to me!"

"Yes, indeed, why not? Marriage is not, as you suppose, the object of my scorn! I proclaimed that antipathy to relieve myself of the trouble of finding a wife at the age when I might have chosen one. Since I have been ruined the thing has become more conditional. My mother would never have allowed me to accept a fortune without a name, and having nothing now but my name, I can no longer aspire to anything but fortune. You know that, wholly detestable as I am, I have never wanted to wound my mother by going counter to her opinions. I have therefore seen my chances rapidly decrease, and at this moment I should put the worst sort of estimate upon any young lady or widow, whatsoever her wealth or birth, who would have me. I should persuade myself that, to accept a good-for-nothing like me, she must have some very dark motive. But, Urbain, your position is altogether different; I have lessened your fortune, perhaps made you poor. That, however, takes nothing from your personal merit; on the contrary, it should make it greater in the eyes of every one knowing the cause of your

meagre fortune. It is nothing more than probable that some pure young woman, of noble family and with a fortune, should be inspired with esteem and affection for you. It seems to me even that all you will have to do is but to wish such a thing, and to show yourself."

"No, I do not know how to show myself, except to my own disadvantage. Society paralyzes me, and my reputation as a scholar injures more than it serves me. Society does not understand why a man born for society does not prefer it above all things. Besides, you see, I cannot want to love; my heart is too dark and heavy."

"Why, then, do you mourn so long a woman who did not know how to be happy with your affection?"

"Because I loved her. In her it was perhaps my own passion that I loved. I am not of those lively natures which bloom again at each new season. Things take a terrible hold of me."

"You read too much, you reflect too much."

"Perhaps I do; come to the country, brother, as you have promised to do; you shall assist me; you will benefit me greatly. Will you come? I have a real need of a friend, and I have none. A silent passion has absorbed my life; your affection will rejuvenate me."

The Duke was greatly moved by the frank and tender confidence of his brother. He had expected lessons, counsels, consolations, which would have made him play the part of the weak, in the presence of the strong man; on the contrary, it was of him that Urbain asked for strength and pity. Whether this came from an actual need of the Marquis or from an exalted delicacy, the Duke was too intelligent not to be struck by the change. He assured him, therefore, of a lively affection, a tender solicitude; and after having spent the whole afternoon talking and walking in the grove, the two brothers took a carriage and returned together to dine with their mother.

For some days the Marchioness had been secretly very ill at ease. She had feared the resistance of Urbain when he should learn the whole amount of his brother's debts. However great her esteem for her younger son, she had

not foreseen to what lengths his disinterestedness would go. Not having received his usual visit on that morning, she became seriously troubled, when, just before the hour of dinner, she saw her two sons arrive. She observed in the face of each such a calm expression of confidence and affection as led her at first to divine what had passed between them; then, however, in the presence of a visitor who was slow to depart, she could not question them, and finally she received the dreadful impression that she had been deceived and that neither the one nor the other was fully aware of the situation.

But when they were at last at table, she remarked that they addressed each other in the familiar and endearing *thee* and *thou*, she understood all, and the presence of Caroline and the servants hindering her from expressing her emotion, she concealed her joy in an affectation of extreme cheerfulness, while great tears fell upon her faded cheeks. Caroline and the Marquis perceived these tears at the same moment, and her troubled look seemed to ask of him whether the Marchioness was concealing joy or suffering. The Marquis quieted her solicitude by the same means in which it had been conveyed; and the Duke, detecting this mute, rapid dialogue, smiled with a sort of good-natured malice. Neither Caroline nor the Marquis paid attention to this smile. There was too much good faith in their mutual sympathy. Caroline still held to her dislike and distrust of the Duke. She continued to grudge him the power of being so amiable and of appearing so good. She thought indeed that Madame de D—— had slightly exaggerated his waywardness; but feeling, in spite of herself, a vague fear, she avoided seeing him, and even in his presence forced herself to forget his face. When the dessert was brought in and the servants had retired, the conversation became a little more intimate. Caroline asked timidly of the Marchioness if she did not think the clock was slow.

"No, no, not yet, dear child," kindly replied the old lady.

Caroline understood that she was to remain till they left the table.

"So, my good friends," said the Marchioness, addressing her sons, "you breakfasted together in the Bois?"

"Like Orestes and Pylades," answered the Duke, "and you could n't imagine, dear mother, how fine it all was. And then I made a delightful discovery there, namely, that I have a charming brother. O, the word seems frivolous to you when applied to him; very well, I at least do not understand it in its trivial sense. The charm of the understanding is occasionally the charm of the heart, and my brother has them both."

The Marchioness smiled again, but she soon became thoughtful; a cloud passed athwart her mind. "Gaëtan should be pained to receive his brother's sacrifice," she thought; "he takes it too lightly; perhaps he has lost his pride. Heavens! that would be fatal to him."

Urbain saw this cloud and hastened to dissipate it. "For my part," he said, addressing his mother cheerfully and tenderly, "I will not say in return that my brother is more charming than I am, for that is too apparent; but I will say that I have also made a discovery, which is that he has admirable and serious depths in his nature, and an unalterable respect for all that is true. Yes," he added, in instinctive reply to the profoundly astonished look of Caroline, "there is in him a veritable candor which no one suspects, and which I have never before fully appreciated."

"My children," said the Marchioness, "it does me good to hear you speak thus of each other; you touch my pride in the most sensitive place, and I am really led to believe that you are both right."

"As far as it concerns me," rejoined the Duke, "you think so because you are the best of mothers; but you are blind. I am good for nothing at all, and the sad smile of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix says plainly enough that you and my brother are both deceiving yourselves."

"What! I smiled!" cried Caroline, in stupefaction; "have I looked sad? I could take my oath that I have not raised my eyes from this decanter, and

that I have been meditating profoundly upon the qualities of crown-glass."

"Do not fancy we believe," returned Gaëtan, "that your thoughts are always absorbed by household cares. I believe that they are frequently elevated far above the region of decanters, and that you judge of men and things from a very high stand-point."

"I allow myself to judge no one, your Grace."

"So much the worse for those who are not worth the exercise of your judgment. They could but gain by knowing it, however severe it might be. I myself, for instance, like to be judged by women. From their mouths I like a frank condemnation better than the silence of disdain or of mistrust. I regard women as the only beings really capable of appreciating our failings or our good qualities."

"But, Madame de Villemer," said Caroline to the Marchioness in a distressed manner which was sportively assumed, "please tell his Grace the Duke that I have not the honor of knowing him at all, and that I am not here to continue in my head the portraits of La Bruyère."

"Dear child," replied the Marchioness, "you are here to be a sort of adopted daughter, to whom everything is permitted, because we are aware of your fine discretion and your perfect modesty. Do not hesitate therefore to answer my son, and do not be disturbed by his friendly attempt to tease you. He knows as well as I do who you are, and he will never be wanting in the respect which is your due."

"This time, mother, I accept the compliment," said the Duke, in a tone of entire frankness. "I have the profoundest respect for every pure, generous, and devoted woman, and consequently for Mlle. de Saint-Geneix in particular."

Caroline did not blush, or stammer the thanks of a prude governess. She looked the Duke squarely in the eyes, saw that he was not at all mocking her, and answered him with kindness, —

"Why, then, your Grace, having so generous an opinion of me, do you suppose that I permit myself to have a bad one of you?"

"O, I have my reasons," answered the Duke; "I will tell them to you when you know me better."

"Well, but why not now?" said the Marchioness; "it would be the preferable way."

"So be it," rejoined the Duke. "It is an anecdote. I will tell it. Day before yesterday I was alone in your drawing-room, waiting for you, mother mine. I was musing in a corner, and finding myself comfortably seated upon one of your little sofas, — I had that morning been training an unruly horse and was as tired as an ox, — I was meditating upon the destiny of cappadine seats in general, as Mlle. de Saint-Geneix was just meditating upon that of crown-glass, and I said to myself, 'How astonished these sofas and easy-chairs would be to find themselves in a stable or in a cattle-shed! And how troubled those beautiful ladies in robes of satin who are coming here directly would certainly be, if in the place of these luxurious seats they should find nothing but litter!'"

"But your reverie hasn't common sense in it," said the Marchioness, laughing.

"That's true," rejoined the Duke. "Those were the thoughts of a man slightly intoxicated."

"What do you say, my son?"

"Nothing very improper, dear mother. I came home hungry, weak, bruised, already intoxicated with the open air. You know that water does not agree with me. I cannot slake my thirst, and in making the attempt I got fuddled, — that's all. You know too that it lasts me but a quarter of an hour at most, and that I have sense enough to keep myself quiet the necessary time. That is why, instead of coming to kiss your hand during your dessert, I slipped into the drawing-room, there to recover my senses."

"Come, come," said the Marchioness, "slip over this confusion of your senses, and let us have the point of your story."

"But that's just what I am coming to," rejoined the Duke, "as you shall see."

As he took up again the thread of his discourse with more or less difficulty, Caroline could see that the Duke was

in exactly the same state of mind as that of which he was telling, and that his mother's heady wines had probably for some moments been responsible for his prolixity. Very soon, however, he overcame the slight disorder of his ideas, and continued with a grace which was really perfect.

"I was a little absent-minded, I will confess, but not at all besotted. On the contrary, I had poetical visions. From the litter scattered on the floor by my imagination, I saw a thousand odd figures arise. They were all women, some attired as for an old-fashioned court ball, others as for a Flemish peasant festival; the former embarrassed by contact of their crinoline and laces with the fresh straw, which impeded their steps and wounded their feet; the latter in short dresses, shod in great wooden shoes, which tramped lustily over the litter, while their wearers laughed till their mouths were opened wellnigh from ear to ear, at the odd appearance of the others.

"With regard to this side of the picture, it was, as the canvases of Rubens have been called, the festival of flesh. Large hands, red cheeks, powerful shoulders, very prominent noses upon blooming faces, still with admirable eyes, and a sort of cappadine attraction like your sofas and easy-chairs, which had undergone this magic transformation. I cannot otherwise explain to myself the point of departure of my hallucination.

"These splendid, great strapping women abandoned themselves entirely to a light-hearted joy; jumped up a foot in the air and came down again, to make the pendants of the candelabra vibrate, some of them rolling upon the straw, and getting up again with empty wheat-ears tangled in their hair of reddened gold. Opposite these the princesses of the fan attempted a stately dance without being able to accomplish it. The straws arrayed themselves against their furbelows, the heat of the atmosphere caused the paint to fall off, the powder trickled down upon their shoulders, and left the meagreness of their visages confessed; a mortal anguish was depicted in their expressive eyes. Evidently they feared the shining of the sun upon their counterfeit charms, and

saw with fury the reality of life ready to triumph over them."

"Well, well, my son," said the Marchioness, "where are you wandering, and what signifies all this? Have you undertaken the panegyric of viragos?"

"I have undertaken nothing at all," replied the Duke; "I relate; I am inventing nothing. I was under the empire of that vision, and I have no idea into what reflections it would have led me, if I had not heard a woman singing close by me —"

Gaëtan sang very pleasantly the rustic words of which he had faithfully retained the air, and Caroline began to laugh, remembering that she had sung that refrain of her province before perceiving the Duke in the drawing-room.

The Duke continued: "Then I arose, and my vision was completely dissipated. There was no more straw upon the floor; the plump chairs and sofas with wooden legs were no longer girls in wooden shoes from the poultry yard; the slender candelabra, with their bulging ornaments, were no longer thin women in hoop-petticoats. I was quite alone in the lighted apartment, and had completely come to my senses; but I heard the singing of a village air in a style altogether rustic and true and charming, with a freshness of voice, too, of which mine certainly can give you no idea. 'What!' cried I to myself, 'a peasant, a peasant girl in the drawing-room of my mother!' I kept still, hardly breathing, and the peasant girl appeared. She passed before me twice without seeing me, walking quickly and almost touching me with her dress of pearl-gray silk."

"Ah, that," said the Marchioness, — "that then was Caroline?"

"It was somebody unknown," rejoined the Duke; "a singular peasant girl, you will agree, for she was dressed like a modest person, and of the best society. About her head she wore nothing but the glory of her own yellow hair, and she showed neither her arms nor her shoulders; but I saw her neck of snow, and her nice little hand, and feet too, for she did not have on wooden shoes."

Caroline, a little annoyed at the de-

scription of her person by this veteran Lovelace, looked toward the Marquis as if in protest. She was surprised to find a certain anxiety expressed in his face, and he avoided her look with a slight contraction of his brows.

The Duke, from whom nothing escaped, proceeded: "This adorable apparition struck me all the more that it recalled to my eyes the two types of my dispelled vision; that is, she preserved all that made the merit of the one or the other: nobleness of bearing and freshness of manners, delicacy of features, and the glow of health. She was a queen and a shepherdess in the same person."

"That is a picture which does not flatter," said the Marchioness, "but which, exposed face to face with its original, lacks perhaps a lightness of touch. Ah, my son, may you not again be a little — over-excited?"

"You ordered me to speak," rejoined the Duke. "If I speak too much, make me keep still."

"No," was the quick remark of Caroline, who observed a queer, half-suspicious look upon the face of the Marquis, and who was anxious that nothing vague should be left about her first interview with the Duke. "I do not recognize the original of the picture, and I wait for his Grace the Duke to make her speak a little."

"I have a good memory and I shall invent nothing," rejoined he. "Carried away by a sudden, irresistible sympathy, I spoke to this young lady from the country. Her voice, her look, her neat, frank replies, her air of goodness, of real innocence, — the innocence of the heart, — won me to such a degree that I told her of my esteem and respect at the end of five minutes as if I had known her all my life, and I felt myself jealous of her esteem as if she had been my own sister. Is that the truth this time, Mlle. de Saint-Geneix?"

"I know nothing of your private sentiments, your Grace," replied Caroline; "but you seemed to me so affable that it never crossed my mind you could be tender in your cups, and that I was very grateful for your kindness. I see now that I must put a lower esti-

mate upon it, and that there was a trifle of irony in the whole."

"And in what do you see that, if you please?"

"In the exaggerated praise with which you seem to try to excite my vanity; but I protest against it, your Grace, and perhaps it would have been more generous in you not to have commenced the attack upon a person so inoffensive and of so humble a quality as I am."

"Come now," said the Duke, turning toward his brother, who appeared to be thinking upon an entirely different subject, and who, nevertheless, heard everything, as if in his own despite; "she persists in suspecting me and in regarding my respect as an injury. Come now, Marquis, you have been telling her naughty things of me?"

"That is not a habit of mine," answered the Marquis, with the gentleness of truth.

"Well, then," continued the Duke, "I know who has ruined me in the opinion of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix. It is an old lady whose gray hairs are turning to a slaty blue, and whose hands are so thin that her rings have to be hunted up in the sweepings every morning. She talked about me to Mlle. de Saint-Geneix for a quarter of an hour the other evening, and when I sought again the kindly look which had made my heart young, I did not find it, and I do not find it now. You see, Marquis, there is no other way. Ah! but why are you so silent? You commenced my eulogy, and Mlle. de Saint-Geneix seems to have confidence in you. If you would just commence again."

"My children," said the Marchioness, "you can resume the discussion another time. I have to dress, and I want to say something to you before any one comes to interrupt us. The clock is perhaps a few minutes slow."

"I think, indeed, that it is very slow," observed Caroline, rising; and, leaving the Duke and the Marquis to help their mother to her apartment, the young lady went quickly to the drawing-room. She expected to find visitors there, for the dinner had been prolonged a little more than usual; but no one had yet arrived, and, instead of

tripping lightly about, singing as she went, she seated herself thoughtfully by the fire.

VI.

CAROLINE in her own despite commenced to find something galling in her situation. She had endeavored not to think at all about the species of domestic service which she had heroically accepted. No one, indeed, could have been less fitted for this complete surrender of the will. She felt shocked by the obstinate or affected attention paid her by the Duke d'Aléria, and she considered herself constrained to hide her impatience and disdain. "In my sister's house," she said to herself, "I should not be obliged to endure the compliments of this person. I should put an end to them with a single word. He would think me a prude, but that would make no difference. He would be sent off, and all would be said. Here I must be sprightly and polite, like a lady of society, look upon the light side of everything, see nothing offensive in the gallantry of a libertine. I must guess the science of the women who are broken in to this kind of life. If I am as brusque with him as my frankness would lead me to be, the Duke would get a spite at me; he would calumniate me to revenge himself, and perhaps to have me sent away. Sent away! Yes, in my position, one is liable to be surprised by any vile plot, and dismissed without more ceremony than is observed with the humblest servant. These are the dangers and the insults to which I am exposed. I did wrong to come here. Madame d'Arglade never told me about this Duke, and I have been believing in an impossibility."

Caroline was not of an irresolute spirit. From the moment that the thought of going away had occurred to her, she began to cast about in her mind for some other way of supporting her sister. She had received an advance from the Marchioness, and it was necessary to find elsewhere another advance by which to return it, if the conduct of the Duke should not permit of her

remaining with his mother till the time paid for by the little sum sent to Camille had been duly served. Thus Caroline came to think of the few hundreds of francs offered her by her nurse, whose letter received that morning was yet in her pocket. She now read that artless and motherly letter again, and, thinking how great a benefaction can go with the unpretending charity of the poor, she felt herself once more deeply touched and she wept.

The Marquis entered and found her wiping her eyes. She folded up the letter again and put it unaffectedly back in her pocket, without attempting to conceal her emotion under an assumption of cheerfulness. Nevertheless she remarked a shade of irony upon M. de Villemer's face, which usually was so kind. She looked at him as if asking whom he wanted to ridicule, and he, becoming slightly embarrassed, hesitated for words, and ended by saying quite simply, "You were weeping?"

"Yes," she replied, "but not from sorrow."

"You have received good news?"

"No, a proof of friendship."

"You ought to receive such things frequently."

"There are testimonies more or less sincere."

"You seem to be in a doubting mood to-day; you are not every day so mistrustful."

"No, not every day; I am not naturally distrustful. Are you, M. de Villemer?"

Urbain was always a little startled when questioned directly about himself. It cost him an effort to interrogate others, and to be questioned in return caused him a species of trouble.

"I," he answered, after a moment's hesitation, — "I do not know. I should be very much at a loss how to tell you what I am — at this moment especially."

"Yes, you appear to be preoccupied," rejoined Caroline; "do not make an effort to speak to me, M. de Villemer."

"Pardon me, I want — I would like to speak with you; but it is a very delicate matter. I do not know how to begin."

"Ah! indeed? You disquiet me a little. And yet it seems to me that it

will be well for me to know what you are thinking about just now."

"Well—yes, you are right. Quick, then, for we may be interrupted at any moment. I shall not have to say much, I hope, to make you understand me. I love my brother; to-day especially I love him tenderly. I am certain of his sincerity; but his imagination is very lively,—you have just had evidence of that. In short, if he has been a little too persistent in his endeavor to change the unfavorable impression of him which perhaps you may not have at all, and which, in any case, he does not merit but to a certain degree, I would like to have you promise to speak of it to my mother and to my mother only. Do not think it strange or impertinent in me to volunteer my advice. I have such a desire to see my mother happy, and I see so clearly that you already contribute largely to her happiness, the society of an intelligent and worthy person is so necessary to her, and it would probably be so impossible for her to replace you, that I would, knowing you to be happy and satisfied in your position, like to believe that you will always be with her. And now you know the only thing upon which I have been preoccupied."

"I thank you for this explanation, M. de Villemer," replied Caroline, "and I will confess I expected that your integrity would some day consent to give it."

"My integrity? But my whole explanation consists in this: my brother is light-hearted, amiable, and if his gaiety has become painful to you, my mother, able to restrain him and possessing in that respect an ascendancy over him which I cannot have, would on the one hand know how to reassure you, and how on the other, to keep my brother's vivacity of speech within proper bounds."

"Yes, yes, we understand each other," rejoined Caroline; "but we are not quite of the same opinion as to the means of curing the—the amiable sportiveness of his Grace, the Duke. You think that Madame the Marchioness will be able to preserve me from it; and I believe that between an adored son and a tender mother no one can or

ought to carry complaints. Before certain judges we are never right. I have been thinking exactly of this situation, and I foresaw with real sorrow that a moment might come when I should be compelled —"

"To go away from us, to leave my mother?" asked the Marquis, with a sudden eagerness, which he repressed immediately. "That was exactly what I feared. If that idea has already entered your mind, I am very much distressed; but I do not believe it is well founded. Be careful not to be unjust. My brother was very much excited to-day. A particular circumstance, a family matter having much to do with the feelings, had almost overcome him this morning. This evening he was happy, merry, and therefore impulsive. When you know him better —"

The bell was heard to ring. The Marquis started. Friends arrived. He was compelled to leave in suspense many things which he would have liked to say and not to say. He hastened to add, "Now, in the name of Heaven, in the name of my mother, do not be in a hurry to take a step which would be so sad, so grievous to her. If I dared, if I had the right, I would pray you to decide nothing without consulting me —"

"The respect to which your character gives you the right," replied Caroline, "gives you also the right to counsel me, and I do not hesitate to promise you what you have been kind enough to ask."

The Marquis had no time to express his gratitude. They were no longer alone in the drawing-room; but there was an extraordinary eloquence in his look, and Caroline found again in it the confidence and affection which had appeared under a cloud at the commencement of their interview. The eyes of the Marquis had that remarkable beauty which can spring only from an ardent soul joined to great purity of thought. They were the only expression of his inner nature which his timidity did not succeed in paralyzing. Caroline understood him now, and nothing confused, nothing troubled her in the language of those clear eyes which she questioned frequently as the keepers of her conscience and the guides of her conduct.

Caroline really had a veneration for this man, whose character every one appreciated, but whose intelligence and delicacy every one did not fathom or divine. In spite, however, of the satisfaction in which their conversation had just ended, she sought in going over it again to herself to understand it in all its bearings. She thought quickly, and, while going about the drawing-room to do the honors, — within the limits of the favor and reserve which had been imposed upon her, and whose exact lines she had easily observed from the first, — she demanded of herself why the Marquis had seemed to waver among two or three successive ideas in speaking to her. At first he had appeared disposed to reproach her for believing in the flatteries of the Duke, then he had given her a friendly warning against the continuance of these attacks, and finally, as soon as she had expressed her displeasure at them, he himself had hastened to allay it. She had never seen him irresolute, and, if his language was frequently timid, his convictions were never so. "It must be," she thought, "that in the first place he considered me imprudent, and his brother likely to take advantage of the fact; in the second place, it must be that I am really more necessary to his much-loved mother, already, than I could have believed. At all events, there is a hidden something in this which I cannot understand, and which I suppose he will explain to me hereafter. Whatever it may be, I am free. Five hundred francs will not bind me a day, an hour, in a humiliating position. I have not yet sent off my answer to Justine."

We see how far the honest, clear conscience of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix was from seeking in the constrained silence of the Marquis an unbecoming sentiment or an instinct of jealousy. If the Marquis had been questioned at that moment, could he have answered with so much assurance, "With me it is only a respectful esteem and filial solicitude"?

At that moment, in point of fact, M. de Villemer was by no means pleased with his brother, and listened to him with an impatience which was painful enough. The Duke, having entered

the drawing-room with his mother, had come and seated himself near him behind the piano, an isolated and protected place, which was a favorite with the Marquis; here then the Duke began the following conversation, speaking in a low voice but in a very lively manner: —

"Well," he said, "you saw her alone just now; did you speak to her of me?"

"But," replied M. de Villemer, "what singular persistency!"

"There is nothing singular about it," rejoined the Duke, as if he were continuing the details of a confidential disclosure already made. "I am struck, touched, taken. I am in love if you will. Yes, in love with her, upon my honor! It is no joke. Are you going to reproach me, when for the first time in my life I make you my confidant? Was that not agreed upon this morning? Did we not swear to tell each other everything, and to be each other's best friend? I asked you whether you had any feeling for Mlle. de Saint-Geneix; you answered me 'No,' very seriously. Do not, therefore, think it extraordinary that I ask you to serve me with her."

"My friend," replied the Marquis, "I have done exactly the contrary of what you would have me to do. I told her to take nothing you said too seriously."

"Ah, traitor!" cried the Duke, with a gayety whose frankness was as a reparation for his former prejudices against his brother, "that is the way you serve your friends. Trust in Pylades! At the first call he resigns; he whistles at my dreams, and gives my hopes to the winds. But what do you suppose will become of me, if you abandon me in this fashion?"

"For that kind of service I have n't even common sense, you see very plainly."

"That's so; at the first difficulty you renounce it. Well, but I am maddened. I have driven from my heart all that is not you, and none but you shall hear of my new flames."

"With regard to the present one at least, will you pledge me your honor?"

"Ah! you are in great fear lest I compromise her?"

"That would give me serious pain."

"Bah! Come now, why?"

"Because she is proud, sensitive perhaps, and would leave my mother, who dotes upon her, — have you not observed that?"

"Yes, and it is that very thing which has turned my head. She must really be a girl of great cleverness and a deal of heart. Our mother has such perfect tact. This evening, in taking me to task a little for what she considered my attempt at teasing, she held the sugar-plum very high, saying, 'Your conduct toward Caroline was neither proper nor agreeable. She is a person of whom you are not permitted to think.' The deuce! A fellow always has the right to dream; that certainly harms no one. But see though how pretty she is; how alive in the midst of all those plastered women! One can look at the contour of her face in the nearest and most trying light; one will not see there those dull, sticky lines which make the others look like plaster casts. It is true she is too pretty to be any one's young-lady companion. My mother can never keep her; every one will fall in love with her, and if she continues to be well-behaved some one will want to marry her."

"Then," rejoined the Marquis, "you cannot think of her."

"Why so, pray?" demanded the Duke. "Am I not to-day a poor devil with nothing in the world? Is she not of good birth? Is not her reputation spotless? I should like to know what my mother would find to say against it, — she who already calls the young lady her daughter, and who wishes us to respect her as if she were our own sister."

"You, sir, carry your enthusiasm or your joke to great lengths," said the Marquis, stunned by what he heard.

"Good," thought the Duke, "he has forgotten his brotherly *thee* and *thou*; he calls me 'you, sir.'"

And he continued to maintain with astonishing seriousness that he was quite capable of marrying Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, if there were no other means of winning her. "I should prefer to run away with her," he added; "that would better accord with my usual way of doing things; but I no longer have the means with which to

run away with her, and now my laundress herself would not trust herself to my hands. Besides, it is time to break with my entire past. I have said it to you, and it is done, because I have said it. Starting from to-day, — a complete reformation along the whole line. You are going to see a new man, — a man whom I myself do not know, and who indeed is going to astonish me; but that man, I feel now, is capable of all things, all, even to believe, to love, and to marry. So good evening, brother; those are my last words; if you do not repeat them to Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, it is because you wish to do nothing to aid me in my conversion."

The Duke withdrew, leaving his brother stupefied, — divided between the necessity of believing him sincere in his momentary passion and the indignity of being solicited as an accomplice in a flagrant libertinism.

"But no," he said to himself, going to his own apartments; "that was all merely his gayety, his trifling, his folly, — or it was still the wine. Nevertheless, this morning in the grove he interrogated me about Caroline with a surprising insistence, and that, too, almost in the midst of my confidences concerning my past, which he received with genuine emotion, with tears in his eyes. What kind of a man then is this brother of mine? Not twelve hours ago, he thought of killing himself. He hated me, he detested himself. Then I believed I had won his heart. He sobbed in my arms. All day long it has been the extreme of impulse and devotion, winning tenderness and goodwill; and to-night I no longer know what it is. Has his reason received some shock in the uncurbed life which he has hitherto led, or did he indeed make sport of me all the fore part of the day? Am I the dupe of my need to love? Shall I have cause for bitter repentance, or have I in fact taken upon myself the task of caring for a diseased brain?"

In his fright the Marquis accepted this latter supposition as the less appalling; but another anguish was mingled with it. The Marquis felt himself bruised and irritated by a sentiment which he did not avow to himself, and

to which he would not so much as give a name. He set himself to work and worked badly. He went to bed and slept still worse.

As for the Duke, he innocently rubbed his hands. "I have succeeded," said he to himself; "I have found the proper reaction against his despair. Poor, dear brother! I have turned his head, I have aroused his feelings, I have excited his jealousy. He is in love. He will be cured, and he will live. For passion there is no remedy but passion. It is not my mother who would have found that out, and if she is opposed to so humble a match, she will forgive me for making it on the day when she shall know that my brother would have died of his regrets and of his constancy."

The Duke was not perhaps mistaken, and a wiser man could have been less ingenious. He would have endeavored to lead the Marquis back to an interest in life through the love of letters, through filial affection, through reason and duty, — things which were all excellent, but which the invalid himself had long since vainly called to his aid. Now the Duke, from his point of view, imagined that he had rescued everything, and did not foresee that with an exclusive nature like his brother's, the remedy might soon become worse than the disease. The Duke, knowing human susceptibility through himself, believed in a general susceptibility in women, and admitted no exceptions. According to his ideas, Caroline would not make any struggle at all; he believed her already quite disposed to love the Marquis. "She is a good young woman," he said to himself; "not at all ambitious, and entirely disinterested. I judged her at the first glance, and my mother assures me that I am not mistaken. She will yield through her need to love some one, and through allurements, too, for my brother has great attractions for an intelligent woman. If she resists him awhile, it will be all the better; he will be so much the more attached to her. My mother will see nothing of this, and if she does see it, it will agitate her, it will occupy her too. She will be good, she will preach the requirements of caste, and yield to endearment. These

little domestic emotions will rescue her from the tedium which is her greatest torment."

To these heartless calculations the Duke gave himself up with perfect candor. He grew tender himself over this sort of puerility which oftentimes characterizes corruption as an exhaustion. He laughed to himself as he regarded the beautiful victim already immolated, in imagination to his projects; and if any one had questioned him on the subject, he would have answered with a laugh, that he was in the act of arranging a romance after the manner of Florian, as a beginning to his contemplated life of sentiment and innocence.

He remained in the drawing-room the whole evening, and found the means to speak to Caroline without being overheard. "My mother has been scolding me," he said. "It appears that I have been absurd with you. I did not suspect such a thing, I assure you, for I really wanted to prove to you my respect. In a word, my mother has made me pledge my honor that I will not think of making love to you, and I pledged it without hesitation. Are you quieted now?"

"All the more that I have not thought of being disquieted."

"That's fortunate. Since my mother forced me into the rudeness of saying to a woman what we never say, even when we think it, let us be good friends like two well-meaning people as we are, and let us be frank with each other to commence with. Promise me, then, no longer to speak ill of me to my brother."

"No longer? When, pray, have I spoken ill of you to him?"

"You did not complain of my impertinence — there, this evening?"

"I said that I dreaded your raillery, and that, if it continued, I should go away; that is all."

"Indeed," thought the Duke, "they are already on better terms than I had hoped." He rejoined, "If you think of quitting my mother on my account, it will condemn me to go away from her myself."

"That could not be thought of. A son giving place to a stranger!"

"That nevertheless is what I have resolved to do, if I displease you and if

I frighten you ; but remain, and command me to be and do as you would wish. Ought I never to see you, never speak to you, not even salute you ? ”

“ I exact no affectation in any sense whatever. You are too clever and experienced not to have understood that I am not skilled enough in the artifices of speech to sustain any assault against you.”

“ You are too modest ; but since you do not wish that the prescribed forms of admiration should mingle with those of respect, and since the attention, which it is so difficult for you not to awaken, alarms and afflicts you, be at ease ; I consider it said and done : you will have no further cause of complaint in me. I swear it by all that a man can hold sacred, — by my mother ! ”

After having thus made reparation for his fault and reassured Caroline, whose going away would have foiled his plan, the Duke began to speak to her of Urbain with a veritable enthusiasm. Upon this point he was so thoroughly sincere, that Mlle. de Saint-Geneix laid aside her prejudices. Her mind became calm again, and she hastened to write to Camille that everything was going well, that the Duke was much better than his reputation, and that, at all events, he had engaged upon his honor not to disturb her.

During the month succeeding that day Caroline saw very little of M. de Villemer. He was obliged to be occupied with the details of settling his brother's debts ; then he absented himself. He told his mother that he was going to Normandy to see a certain historical castle whose plan was necessary for his work, and he set out in quite an opposite direction, confiding to the Duke alone that he was going in the strictest incognito to see his son.

As for the Duke himself, he was very busy with the change of his pecuniary position. He sold his horses, his furniture and personal property, discharged his lackeys, and came, at the request of his mother, to install himself provisionally, for economy's sake, in a suite of apartments between the ground floor and the first story of her hotel, which was going to be sold also, but with the reservation that the Marquis should re-

main for ten years the principal tenant, and that nothing should be changed in the apartments of his mother.

Urbain himself had ascended to the third story and piled up his books in a lodging more than modest, protesting that he had never been better off, and that he had a magnificent view of the Champs-Élysées. During his absence the preparations for the departure to the country were made, and Mlle. de Saint-Geneix wrote to her sister : “ I am counting the days which separate us from the blissful time when I can at last walk to my heart's content, and breathe a pure air. I have enough of flowers which faint and die upon the mantels ; I am thirsty for those which bloom in the open fields.”

VII.

LETTER FROM THE MARQUIS DE VILLEMER TO THE DUKE D'ALÉRIA.

POLIGNAC, *via* LE PUY (HAUTE-LOIRE),
May 1, '45.

THE address I give you is a secret which I intrust to you, and which I am happy to intrust to you. If by any unforeseen accident I should chance to die, away from you, you would know that your first duty would be to send hither and see that the child was not neglected by the people in whose charge I have placed him. These people do not know who I am ; they know neither my name nor my country ; they are not aware even that the child is mine. That these precautions are necessary, I have already told you. M. de G—— clings to suspicions which would naturally lead him to doubt the legitimacy of his daughter, — really his own, nevertheless. This fear was the torture of their unhappy mother, to whom I swore that the existence of Didier should be concealed until Laura's fortune had been assured. I have noticed more than once the uneasy curiosity with which my movements have been watched. I cannot therefore cloud them too much in mystery.

This is my reason for placing my son so far away from me and in a province

where having no other interests of any kind, I run less risk than I should elsewhere of being betrayed through some accidental meeting. The people with whom I have to deal give me every possible guaranty of their honesty, goodwill, and discretion, in the single fact that they abstain from questioning or watching me. The nurse is the niece of Joseph, that good old servant whom we lost a year ago. It was he who recommended her to me; but she, too, is in complete ignorance regarding me. She knows me by the name of "Bernyer." The woman is young, healthy, and good-humored, a simple peasant, but comfortably provided for. I should fear that, in making her richer, I could not eradicate the parsimonious habits of the country, which, I perceive, are even more inveterate here than elsewhere; and I have held merely to this, that the poor child, while brought up in the true conditions of rustic development, should not have to suffer from an excess of these conditions; this excess having precisely the same effect upon children that lack of sunlight produces upon plants.

My hosts, for I am writing this in their house, are farmers, having charge of the enclosed grounds, within which rises, from a rocky platform, one of the rudest of mediæval fortresses, the cradle of that family whose last representatives played such an unhappy part in the recent vicissitudes of our monarchy. Their ancestors in this province played no less sad a one, and no less important to an age when the feudal system had made the part of king very insignificant. It is not without interest for the historical work upon which I am engaged, to gather up the traditions here and to study the look and character of the old manor and the surrounding country; so I have not absolutely deceived my mother in telling her that I was going to travel in "search of information."

There is really much to be learned here in the very heart of our beautiful France, which it is not fashionable to visit, and which consequently still hides its shrines of poetry and its mines of science in inaccessible nooks. Here is a country without roads, without guides,

without any facilities for locomotion, where every discovery must be conquered at the price of danger or fatigue. The inhabitants know as little about it as strangers. Their purely rural lives confine their ideas of locality to a very limited horizon: on a stroll, then, it is impossible to get any information, if you do not know the names and relative situations of all the little straggling villages; indeed, without a very complete map to consult at every step, although I have been in this country three times in the two years of Didier's life here, I could find my way only in a straight line, a thing entirely out of the question over a soil cut up with deep ravines, crossed in every way by lofty walls of lava, and furrowed by numerous torrents.

But I need not go far to appreciate the wild and striking character of the landscape. Nothing, my friend, can give you an idea of this basin of Le Puy with its picturesque beauty, and I can think of no place more difficult to describe. It is not Switzerland, it is less terrible; it is not Italy, it is more lovely; it is Central France with all its Vesuviuses extinct and clothed with splendid vegetation; and yet it is neither Auvergne nor Limosin, with which you are familiar.

But I have said enough to keep my promise and to give you some general idea of the country. My dear brother, you urged me to write a long letter, foreseeing that, in my lonely, sleepless hours, I should think too much about myself, my sad life, and my painful past, in the presence of this child who is sleeping yonder while I write! It is true that the sight of him reopens many wounds, and that it is doing me a kindness to compel me to forget myself while generalizing my impressions. And yet I find here powerful emotions, too, which are not without sweetness. Shall I close my letter before I have spoken of him? You see I hesitate; I fear I shall make you smile. You pretend to detest children. As for me, without feeling that repugnance I used formerly to shrink from coming in contact with these little beings, whose helpless candor had something appalling to my

mind. To-day I am totally changed in this regard, and even if you should laugh at me, I must still open my heart to you without reserve. Yes, yes, my friend, I must do it. That you may know me thoroughly, I ought to conquer my sensitiveness.

Well, then, you must know I worship this child, and I see, that sooner or later, he will be my whole life and my whole aim. It is not duty alone that brings me to him, it is my own heart that cries out for him, when I have gone without seeing him for a certain length of time. He is comfortable here, he wants for nothing, he is growing strong, he is beloved. His adopted parents are excellent souls, and, as to caring for him properly, I can see that their hearts are in the matter as well as their interests. They live in a part of the manor-house which yet remains standing and which has been suitably restored. They are neat and painstaking people, and they are bringing up the child within these ruins, on the summit of the large rock, under a bright sky, and in a pure and bracing atmosphere. The woman has lived in Paris; she has correct ideas as to the amount of energy and also of humoring that it takes to manage a child more delicate, indeed, than her own children, but with as good a constitution; so I need not feel anxious about anything, but can await the age when it will become necessary to care for and form other material than the body. Well! I am ill at ease about him just as soon as I am away from him. His existence then often seems like an anxiety and a deep trouble in my life; but, when I see him again, all fears vanish and all bitterness is allayed. What shall I say then? I love him! I feel that he belongs to me and that I belong equally to him. I feel that he is mine, yes, mine, far more than his poor mother ever was; as his features and disposition become more marked, I seek vainly in him for something which may recall her to me, and this something does not seem to unfold. Contrary to the usual law which makes boys rather than girls inherit the traits of the mother, it is his father that this child will resemble, if he continues, henceforth, to develop in the way he

seems to be doing now. He has already my indolence and the unconquerable timidity of my earliest years, which my mother so often tells me about, and my quick, impulsive moments of unreserved confidence, which made her, she says, forgive me and love me in spite of all. This year he has taken notice of my presence near him. He was afraid at first, but now he smiles and tries to talk. His smile and broken words make me tremble; and when he takes my hand to walk, a certain grateful feeling toward him, I cannot tell what, brings to my eyes tears which I conceal with difficulty.

But this is enough, I do not want to appear too much of a child myself: I have told you this that you may no longer wonder why I refuse to listen to your plans for me. My friend, you must never speak to me of love or marriage. I have not store of happiness enough to bestow any upon a being that would be new to my life. My life itself is hardly sufficient for my duties, as I see clearly in the affection I have for Didier, for my mother, and for you. With this thirst for study, which so often becomes a fever in me, what time should I have for enlivening the leisure hours of a young woman eager for happiness and gayety? No, no, do not think of it; and if the idea of such isolation is sometimes fearful at my age, help me to await the moment when it will be perfectly natural. This will be my task for several years to come. Your affection, as you know, will make them seem fewer and shorter. Keep it for me, indulgent to my faults, generous even toward my confidence.

P. S. I presume that my mother has left for Séval with Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, and that you have accompanied them. If my mother is anxious about me, tell her you have heard from me and that I am still in Normandy.

VIII.

THE same day on which the Marquis wrote to his brother Caroline wrote to her sister, and sketched, after her own manner, the country where she was.

SÉVAL, near CHAMBON (CREUSE), May 1, '45.

At last, my sister, we are here, and it is a terrestrial paradise. The castle is old and small, but well arranged for comfort and picturesque enough. The park is sufficiently large, not any too well kept, and not in the English fashion — thank Heaven! — rich in fine old trees covered with ivy, and in grasses running wild. The country is delightful. We are still in Auvergne, in spite of the new boundaries, but very near to the old limits of La Marche, and within a league of a little city called Chambon, through which we passed on our way to the castle. This little town is very well situated. It is reached by a mountain ascent, or rather, through a cleft in a deep ravine; for mountain, properly speaking, there is none. Leaving behind the broad plains of thin, moist soil, covered with small trees and large bushes, you descend into a long, winding gorge, which in some places enlarges into a valley. In the bottom of this ravine, which soon divides into branches, flow rivers of pure crystal, not navigable, and rather torrents than rivers, although they only whirl along, boiling a little, but threatening no danger. As for myself, having never known anything but our great plains and wide, smooth rivers, I am somewhat inclined to look upon all here as either hill or abyss; but the Marchioness, who has seen the Alps and the Pyrenees, laughs at me, and pretends that all this is as insignificant as a table-cover. So I forbear to give you any enthusiastic description, lest I mislead your judgment; but the Marchioness, who cannot be accused of an undue love of nature, will never succeed in preventing me from being delighted with what I see.

It is a country of grasses and leafage, one continual cradle of verdure. The river, which descends the ravine, is called the Vouèze, and then, uniting with the Tarde at Chambon, it becomes the Char, which, again at the end of the first valley, is called the Cher, a stream that every one knows. For myself, I like the name Char (or car); it is excellent for a stream like this, which in reality rolls along at about the pace of a carriage well under way down a gentle slope, where there is nothing to make

it jolt or jar unreasonably. The road also is straight and sanded like a garden walk, lined too with magnificent beeches, through which one can see outspread the natural meadows that are just now one carpet of flowers. O, these lovely meadows, my dear Camille! How little they resemble our artificial plains, where you always see the same plant on ground prepared in regular beds! Here you feel that you are walking over two or three layers of vegetation, of moss, reeds, iris, a thousand kinds of grasses, some of them pretty, and others prettier still, columbines, forget-me-nots, and I know not what! There is everything; and they all come of their own accord, and they come always! It is not necessary to turn over the ground once in every three or four years to expose the roots to the air and to begin over again the everlasting harrowing which our indolent soil seems to need. And then, here, some of the land is permitted to go to waste or poorly tilled, or so it seems; and in these abandoned nooks Nature heartily enjoys making herself wild and beautiful. She shoots forth at you great briars which seem inexhaustible and thistles that look like African plants, they flaunt such large coarse leaves, slashed and ragged, to be sure, but admirable in design and effect.

When we had crossed the valley, — I am speaking of yesterday, — we climbed a very rugged and precipitous ascent. The weather was damp, misty, charming. I asked leave to walk, and, at the height of five or six hundred feet, I could see the whole of this lovely ravine of verdure. The far-off trees were already crowding toward the brink of the water at my feet, while from point to point in the distance rustic mills and sluices filled the air with the muffled cadences of their sounds. Mingled with all this were the notes of a bagpipe from I know not where, and which kept repeating a simple but pleasing air, till I had heard more than enough of it. A peasant who was walking in front of me began to sing the words, following and carrying along the air, as if he wanted to help the musician through with it. The words, without rhyme or reason, seemed so curious that I will give them to you. —

"Alas! how hard are the rocks!
The sun melts them not, —
The sun, *nor yet the moon!*
The lad who would love
Seeketh his pain."

There is always something mysterious in peasant songs, and the music, as defective as the verses, is also mysterious, often sad and inducing revery. For myself, condemned as I am to do my dreaming at lightning speed, since my life does not belong to me, I was forcibly impressed by this couplet, and I asked myself many times why "the moon," at least, did not melt the rocks; did this mean that, by night as well as by day, the grief of the peasant lover is as heavy as his mountains?

On the top of this hill, which appropriately bristles with these large rocks, so cruelly hard, — the Marchioness says they are small as grains of sand, but then I never happened to see any such beautiful sand, — we entered upon a road narrower than the highway, and, after walking a little way amid enclosures of wooded grounds, we found ourselves at the entrance of the castle, which is entirely shaded by the trees, and not imposing in appearance; but on the other side it commands the whole beautiful ravine that we had just passed through. You can see the deep declivity, with its rocks and its bushes, the river too with its trees, its meadows, its mills, and the winding outlet through which it flows, between banks growing more and more narrow and precipitous. There is in the park a very pretty spring, which rises there, to fall in spray along the rocks. The garden is well in bloom. In the lower court there is a lot of animals which I am permitted to manage. I have a delightful room, very secluded, with the finest view of all; the library is the largest apartment in the house. The drawing-room of the Marchioness, in its furniture and arrangement, calls to mind the one in Paris; but it is larger, not so deadening to sound, and one can breathe in it. In short, I am well, I am content, I feel myself reviving; I rise at daybreak, and until the Marchioness appears, which, thank Heaven, is no earlier here than in Paris, I am going to belong to myself in a most agreeable fashion. O,

how free I shall be to walk, and write to you, and think of you! Alas! if I only had one of the children here, Lili or Charley, what delightful and instructive walks we could take together! But it is in vain for me to fall in love with all the handsome darlings that I meet, for it does not last. A moment after I compare them with yours, and I feel that yours will have no serious rivals in my affections, and in the midst of my rejoicing at being in the country, comes the thought that I am farther from you than I was before! — and when shall I see you again?

"Alas! how hard are the rocks!" But it's of no use to struggle against all of those which cumber the lives of poor people like us. I must do my duty and become attached to the Marchioness. Loving her is not difficult. Every day she is more kind to me; she is really almost like a mother to me, and her fancy for petting and spoiling me makes me forget my real position. We expected to find the Marquis on our arrival, since he promised to meet his mother here. It cannot be long before he comes. As for the Duke, he will be here, I think, next week. Let us hope that he will be as civil to me in the country as he has been lately in Paris, and not oblige me to show my temper.

At another time Caroline reported to her sister the opinions of the Marchioness on country life.

" 'My dear child,' said she to me not long since, 'in order to love the country one must love the earth stupidly, or nature unreasonably. There is no mean between brutal stupidity and enthusiastic folly. Now you know that if I have anything excitable or even sanguine in my composition, it is for the concerns of society rather than for what is governed by the laws of Nature, which are always the same. Those laws are the work of God, so they are good and beautiful. Man can change nothing in them. His control, his observation, his admiration, even his descriptive eloquence, add nothing at all to them. When you go into ecstasies over an apple-tree in bloom, I do not think you are wrong; I think, on the contrary, that you are very right, but it seems to

me hardly worth while to praise the apple-tree which does not hear you, which does not bloom to please you, and which will bloom neither the more nor the less, if you say nothing to it. Be assured that when you exclaim, "How beautiful is the spring!" it is just the same as if you said, "The spring is the spring!" Well, then, yes, it is warm in summer because God has made the sun. The river is clear because it is running water, and it is running water because its bed is inclined. It is beautiful because there is in all this a great harmony; but if it had not this harmony, all the beauty would not exist.'

"Thus you see the Marchioness is nothing of an artist, and that she has arguments at her service for not understanding what she does not feel; but in this is she not like the rest of the world, and are we not all acting like her, with respect to any faculty we may happen to lack?"

"As she was thus talking, seated on a garden bench much fatigued with the 'exercise' she had taken, — namely, a hundred paces on a sanded walk, — a peasant came to the garden gate to sell fish to the cook, who was bargaining with him. I recognized this peasant as the one who had walked before me on the day of our arrival, singing the song about the 'hard rocks.' 'What are you thinking of?' asked the Marchioness, who saw that I was observing him.

"'I am thinking,' I replied, 'of watching that stout fellow. It is no longer an apple-tree or a river, you see, and he has a peculiar countenance, with which I have been struck.'

"'How, pray?'

"'Why, if I were not afraid to repeat a modern word of which you seem to have a horror, I should say that this man has character.'

"'How do you know? Is it because he is obstinate about the price of his fish? Ah! that's it; but pardon me. Character? the word, you see, has become a pun in my mind. I have forgotten to think of it as used in literature — or art. A piece of dress goods, a bench, a kettle, have character now; that is to say, a kettle has the shape of a kettle, a bench looks like a bench, and dress goods have the effect of dress

goods? Or is it the contrary, rather? Have dress goods the character of a cloud, a bench that of a table, and a kettle that of a well? I will never admit your word, I give you warning!' — and then she began to talk about the neighboring peasantry. 'They are not bad people,' said she; 'not so much given to cheating as to wheedling. They are eager for money, because they are in want of everything; but they allow themselves nothing from the money which they make. They hoard up to buy property, and, when the hour has come, they are intoxicated with the delight of acquisition, buy too largely, borrow at any price, and are ruined. Those who best understand their own interests become usurers and speculate on this rage for property, sure that the lands will return to them at a lower price, when the purchaser shall have become bankrupt. This is why some peasants climb up into the citizen class, while the greater number fall back lower than ever. It is the sad side of the natural law, for these people are governed by an instinct almost as fatal and blind as that which makes the apple-tree blossom. So the peasant interests me but little. I assist the lame and the half-witted, the widows and children, but the healthy ones are not to be interfered with. They are more headstrong than their mules.'

"'Then, Madame, what is there here to interest one?'

"'Nothing. We come here because the air is good, and because we can benefit our health and purse a little. And then it is the custom. Everybody leaves Paris at the earliest possible moment. One must go away when the others do.'

"You see, dear Camille, by this specimen of our conversation, that the Marchioness looks gloomily upon the present age, and you can, too, by the same means, now form some idea of this 'talking life' of hers, which you said you could not understand. Upon every subject she has an intelligent criticism always ready, sometimes bright and good-natured, sometimes sharp and bitter. She has talked too much in the course of her life to be happy. Think-

ing of two or three or thirty people, continually, and without taking time to collect one's self, is, I believe, a great abuse. One ceases to question one's self, affirming always; for otherwise there could be no discussion, and all conversation would cease. Condemned to this exercise, - I should give way to doubt or to disgust of my fellow-creatures, if I had not the long morning to recover myself and find my balance again. Although Madame de Villemer, by her wit and good-humor, throws every possible charm about this dry employment of our time, I long for the Marquis to come and take his share in this dawdling oratory."

The Marquis did really arrive in the course of a week or ten days, but he was worried and absent-minded, and Caroline noticed that he was peculiarly cold toward her. He plunged directly into his favorite pursuits, and no longer allowed himself to be seen at all till the hour of dinner. This peculiarity was the more evident to Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, because the Marquis seemed to be making more effort than he had ever done before to stand his ground in discussions with his mother, — to the very great satisfaction of the latter, who feared nothing in the world but silence and wandering attention; so that Caroline, seeing herself no longer needed to spur on a lagging conversation, and getting the impression that she paralyzed the Marquis more than she assisted him, was less assiduous in profiting by his presence, and took it upon herself to withdraw early in the evening.

IX.

WHEN at the end of another week the Duke also arrived, he was surprised by this state of affairs. Deeply touched by his brother's letter from Polignac, but believing that he detected in him rather a struggle against himself than a resolution actually formed, his Grace had intentionally delayed his appearance, so as to give time to the isolation and freedom of the country to work upon the two hearts which he believed to have been moved by his words, and

which he expected to find in accord. He had not foreseen the absence of coquetry or imagination on the part of Caroline, the real dismay, serious resistance, internal combat, on the part of the Marquis. "How is this now?" the Duke asked of himself, as he saw that even their friendly disposition one for the other seemed to have disappeared. "Is it a sense of morality that has so soon quenched the fire? Has my brother been making an abortive attempt? Is his access of sadness from fear or spite? Is the girl a prude? No. Ambitious? No. The Marquis will not know how to explain himself. Perhaps he has kept all the powers of his mind for his books, when he should have bestowed them in the service of his growing passion."

The Duke, nevertheless, did not hasten to discover the truth. He was the prey of conflicting resolutions. He had succeeded in gaining a thorough knowledge of the state of the Marquis's affairs. The income of the latter was barely thirty thousand francs, twelve thousand of which were given over as a pension to his spendthrift brother. The rest was applied almost entirely to the support and service of the Marchioness, and the Marquis himself lived in his own house without making any more expense there on his private account than if he had been an unobtrusive guest.

The Duke was wounded by this state of affairs, which he had brought about, and of which the Marquis did not appear to think at all. His Grace had endured his own ruin in the most brilliant manner. He had shown himself a veritable grandee, and if he had lost many companions of his pleasures, he had recognized many faithful friends. He had grown in the opinion of the world, and he was forgiven the trouble and scandal he had caused in more than one family, when he was seen to accept with courage and spirit the expiation of his wild and reckless life. He had thus undauntedly assumed the part which was hereafter proper for him; but there was a feeling of penitence which disturbed his mental balance, and about which he agitated himself with less clearness of sight and strength of resolution than he would have done if it

had been a matter concerning only himself. Thoroughly sincere and well disposed in his lack of reason, he cast about him for the means of making his brother happy. Sometimes he persuaded himself that love should be introduced into Urbain's life of meditation and competence; at other times he thought it his duty to inspire the Marquis with ambition, dealing sharply with his repugnances and trying once more to suggest to him the idea of a great marriage.

This latter was also the dream of the Marchioness, one that had always been dear to her; and she now gave herself up to it more than ever, believing that her maternal enthusiasm at the generosity of the Marquis would be shared by some accomplished heiress. She confided to the Duke that she was in treaty with her friend, the Duchess de Dunières, about marrying the Marquis to a Xaintrilles, an orphan, very rich, and reputed beautiful, who was weary of her studies at the convent, and who nevertheless was very exacting as to merit and quality. From all indications the thing was possible, but it was necessary that Urbain should favor it, and he did not favor it, saying that he should never marry, if the occasion did not come to find him, and that he was the last man in the world to go and see an unknown woman with the intention of pleasing her.

"Try then, my son," said the Marchioness to the Duke, the day after his arrival, "to cure him of that wild timidity. As for me it is a sheer waste of words."

The Duke undertook the task, and found his brother uncertain, careless, not saying no, but refusing to take any step in the matter, and observing merely that it was necessary to wait for the chance which might lead him to meet the person; that, if she pleased him, he would *afterward* endeavor to learn whether she had no dislike for him. Nothing could be done just then, since they were in the country; there was no hurry about it; he was not more unhappy than usual, and he had a great deal of work to do.

The Marchioness grew impatient at this compromising with time, and con-

tinued to write, taking the Duke for secretary in this affair, which was not in Caroline's department.

The Duke seeing clearly that for six whole months this marriage would not advance one step, returned to the idea of bringing about a temporary diversion of his brother's mind by a country romance. The heroine was at hand, and she was charming. She was suffering perhaps a little from the very apparent coldness of M. de Villemer. The Duke devoted himself to learning the cause of this coldness. He failed utterly; the Marquis was inscrutable. His brother's questions seemed to astonish him.

The fact is that the idea of making love to Mlle. de Saint-Geneix had never entered his mind. He would have made it a very grave case of conscience with himself, and he did not compound with his conscience. He had insensibly submitted to the strong and real attraction of Caroline, given himself up to it unreservedly; then his brother, in seeking to excite his jealousy, had caused him to discover a more pronounced inclination in this sympathy without a name. He had suffered terribly for some days. He had demanded of himself if he were free, and he considered himself placed between a mother who desired him to make an ambitious marriage, and a brother to whom he owed the wreck of his fortune. He had foreseen, besides, invincible resistance in the proud scruples of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix. He already knew enough of her character to be certain that she would never consent to come between his mother and himself. Equally resolved not to commit the folly of being uselessly importunate, and to be guilty of the baseness of betraying the good faith of a fine soul, he worked and struggled to conquer himself, and appeared to have succeeded miraculously. He played his part so well that the Duke was deceived by it. Such courage and delicacy exceeded perhaps the notion which the latter had formed of a duty of this kind. "I have been mistaken," he thought, "my brother is absorbed in the study of history. It is of his book that I must speak to him."

Thereafter the Duke demanded of himself in what way he could employ his own imagination for the next six

months of comparative inaction. Hunting, reading novels, talking with his mother, composing a few ballads, — these were hardly sufficient for so fantastic a spirit, and naturally he began to think of Caroline as the only person who could throw a little poetry and romance about his life. He had decided to pass the half of the year at Séval, and that was a noble resolution for a man who did not like the country except with a great establishment. He intended, by living on the most modest footing with his brother for six months of every year, to refuse six thousand francs of his yearly allowance; and if the Marquis should reject the proffered sacrifice, he purposed to employ that sum in restoring and repairing the manor-house; but he must have a little flirtation to crown all this virtue, and there stopped the virtue of the brave Duke.

"How shall I do," said he to himself, "now that I have pledged my word to her, as well as to my mother, to have nothing of the kind to do with her? There is but one way, simpler perhaps than all the ordinary and worn-out ways: that is, to pay her little attentions, but with the appearance of entire disinterestedness; respect without gallantry, a friendly regard, perfectly frank, and which will inspire her with real confidence. Since, with all this I am in no way prevented from being as clever and gracious as I can be, and as perfectly amiable and devoted as I should be in showing my pretensions, it is very probable that she will be sensible of them, and that of her own accord she will relieve me little by little of my oath. A woman is always astonished that at the end of two or three months of affectionate intimacy one does not say a word of love to her. And then she will find it tedious here, too, since my brother's eyes speak to her no longer. Well, we will see. It will, indeed, be something quite new and spicy to conquer a heart which is held in alarm, without seeming to do it, and to bring about a capitulation without seeming to have been a besieger. I have seen this sort of artifice practised with coquettes and prudes; but I am curious to see how Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, who is

neither coquette nor prude, will undertake to bring about this evolution."

Thus occupied by a puerility of self-conceit, the Duke no longer gave way to tedium. He had never liked brutal debauch, and his dissoluteness had always preserved a certain stamp of elegance. He had used and abused so much of life that he was sufficiently used up himself to make self-restraint no very difficult matter. He had said he was not sorry to renew for himself his health and youth, and even at times he flattered himself that he had perhaps found again the youth of the heart, of which his manners and language had been able to keep up the appearance. From the fact that his brain was still busy upon a perverse romance, he concluded that he could still be romantic.

He manœuvred so skilfully that Mlle. Saint-Geneix had the modesty to be completely deceived by his feigned honesty. Seeing that he never sought to be alone with her, she no longer avoided him. And while without losing her from his eyes, he brought about in the most natural and apparently the least foreseen ways occasions to meet her in her walks, he took his advantage of these meetings by appearing not at all desirous to prolong them, and by himself withdrawing with an air of discretion and just the shade of regret which reconciled amiable politeness with provoking indifference.

He employed all this art without Caroline's having the least suspicion of it. Her own frankness prevented her from divining a plan of that nature. In the course of a week she was as much at her ease with him as if she had never mistrusted him, and she wrote to Madame Heudebert:—

"The Duke is greatly changed for the better since the family event which brought him to himself, or indeed he never merited the accusations of Madame de D——. The latter perhaps is the truth, for I cannot believe that a man of such refined manners and sentiments has ever desired to ruin a woman for the sole pleasure of having a victim to boast of. She (Madame de D——) maintained that he has done so with all his conquests, out of sheer libertinism and vanity. Libertinism — I am not

too sure that I know what that is, in the life of a man of high rank. I have lived among virtuous people, and all I have seen of debauchery has been among poor laborers, who lose their reason in wine and beat their wives in paroxysms of mortal frenzy. If the vice of great lords consists in compromising the women of society, there must be many women of society who easily allow themselves to be compromised, since so great a number of victims has been attributed to the Duke d'Aléria. For my part, I do not see that he concerns himself with women at all, and I never hear him speak ill of any woman in particular. Quite the contrary, he praises virtue, and declares that he believes in it. He seems never to have had anything in the way of perfidy to reproach himself with, because he establishes a very marked difference between those who consent to be ruined and those who do not consent to it. I do not know if he is imposing upon me, but he would appear to have loved with respect and sincerity. Neither his mother nor his brother seems to doubt that, and I certainly like to believe that this is a sincere but inconstant nature, which it was necessary to be very credulous or very vain to have hoped to fix upon one object. That he has been liberal in excess, a gamester, forgetful of his duty to his family, intoxicated with luxury and with trivial pursuits unworthy of a serious man, I do not doubt, and it is in these things that I see the feebleness of his judgment and his vanity; but they are the faults and misfortunes of education and of a life which began in too much privilege. His class is not usually made aware of duty by necessity, being taught everything that is just the opposite of providence and economy. Did not our own poor father ruin himself too, and who would dare say he was to blame for it? As to foppishness or self-conceit in the Duke, after seeking for it patiently, I have not detected the least trace. His conduct here is as unaffected as that of a country squire. He goes in the plainest and cheapest attire, and wins all hearts by his good-nature and simplicity. He never makes the slightest allusion to his past triumphs, and he never boasts of any of his gifts, which are

nevertheless real, for he is charmingly clever; he is always handsome, he sings delightfully, and even composes a little — not very well but with a certain elegance. He talks marvellously well though not very profoundly, for he has read or retained only things of a light nature; but he confesses this with candor, and serious topics are far from being displeasing to him, since he questions his brother on every subject and listens to him intelligently and respectfully.

“As regards the latter, he is always the same spotless mirror, the model of all the virtues, and modesty itself. He is very busy upon a great historical work of which his brother says marvellous things, and that does not astonish me. Nature would have been very illogical, if she had denied him the faculty of expressing the world of weighty ideas and true sentiments with which she has endowed his soul. He carries about with him a sort of religious meditation of his work which causes him to be more reserved with me, and more communicative with his mother and brother than he used to be. I rejoice for them, and, as to myself, I am not offended; it is very natural that he should not expect any light upon such grave subjects from me, and that he should be led to question persons who are more mature and who are better instructed in the science of human actions. At Paris he manifested a good deal of interest in me, especially the day when his brother thought himself at liberty to tease me; but because he has not since showed that particular interest, I have not come to the conclusion that it no longer exists, and that it may not on occasion be again apparent. There will be, however, on such future occasion, since the Duke has so thoroughly improved; but I shall not be the less grateful for being able to count upon so estimable a protector.”

We see that, if Caroline was really affected by the change in the manner of M. de Villemer, she was so without knowing it herself, and without wanting to yield to a vague wound. Her woman's self-love did not enter into the question at all. She felt sure that she

had done nothing to forfeit his esteem, and as she did not expect or desire anything more, she attributed everything to a worthy preoccupation.

Nevertheless, in spite of all her efforts, she began to feel that the time passed tediously with her. She was careful not to write this fact to her sister, who could have imparted no new courage, and whose letters were indeed always loving, yet full of condoling and complaints about her absence and the manner of her self-sacrifice. Caroline humored this tender and timid soul, for whom she had habitually exerted a maternal care, and whom she forced herself to sustain by appearing always as strong and as much at ease as the force of her character enabled her generally to be; but she had her hours of profound weariness, in which her heart was oppressed with a dread of being alone. Although she was more of a captive, more really subjected during a part of the day than she had ever been in her family, she had her mornings and the last hour of the night in which to taste the austerity of solitude and to question herself of her own destiny, — a dangerous liberty which she had never been allowed when she had four children and a necessitous household upon her hands. At times she took refuge in certain poetical musings and found in them an enchanting tenderness; at times, too, a bitterness without cause and without aim made nature hateful to her, her walks fatiguing, and sleep oppressive.

She struggled with herself courageously, but these attacks of melancholy did not escape the eager attention of the Duke d'Aléria. He remarked, on certain days, a bluish shade, which made her eyes look sunken, and a sort of involuntary resistance in the muscles of her face when she smiled. He thought that the hour was approaching, and he proceeded with the plan which he had adopted. He was more kind and more attentive, and when he saw that she recognized the change in his manner, he hastened to remind her delicately that love had nothing to do with it. This grand game, however, was all to no purpose. Caroline was so simple-natured that all skill of this

kind could hardly fail to be lost on her. When the Duke surrounded her with delicate and charming attentions, she attributed them to his friendship, and when he endeavored to goad her on by withdrawing them she rejoiced the more that they sprang only from friendship. The Duke's self-esteem prevented him from seeing clearly in this second phase of his enterprise. Confidence had come; but, in reality, Caroline might open her eyes with no other pain than that of profound astonishment and a pitying disdain. The Duke hoped every returning day to see the growth of spite or impatience in her. He could, however, detect only a little sadness, for which he ingenuously gave himself the credit, and which was mildly pleasurable, though by no means satisfactory to him. "I would have believed her more sensitive," thought he; "there is a trifle of torpidity in her sorrow, and more mildness than warmth."

Gradually this mildness charmed him. He had never seen anything equal to this supposed resignation. He saw in it a hidden modesty, a hopelessness of pleasing, a tender submission, which deeply touched him. "She is good above all others," he said to himself again, — "good as an angel. One could be very happy with that woman, she would be so grateful and so little disposed to quarrel. Truly she does not know what it is to cause suffering; she keeps it all for herself."

By dint of waiting for his prey, the Duke found himself fascinated, and the feeling grew upon him. He was forced to acknowledge that he was ill at ease in her presence, and that his own cruelty troubled him a great deal. At the end of a month he began to lose patience, and to say to himself that he must hasten the catastrophe; but that all at once appeared to him extremely difficult. Caroline yet had too much virtue in his eyes, to permit him to forfeit his word, for in being abrupt he might lose everything.

Entering his mother's apartment one day, the Duke said, "I have just been greatly amusing myself riding one of your farm colts. He resembles a wild boar and a trotting errand-boy at the same time. He has fire and speed, and

is very gentle besides. Mlle. de Saint-Geneix might ride him if she happens to be fond of the exercise."

"I am very fond of it," she replied. "My father required it of me, and I was not grieved to satisfy him in that regard."

"Then I will wager you are an excellent rider?"

"No, I can sit upright and have a nimble hand, like all women."

"Like all women who ride well, for generally women are nervous and would like to lead men and horses after the same fashion; but that is not your character."

"As far as men are concerned, I know nothing at all about it. I have never attempted to lead any one."

"O, you will attempt that, too, some day?"

"It is not probable."

"No," said the Marchioness, "it is not probable. She does not wish to marry, and in her position she is greatly in the right."

"O, certainly," rejoined the Duke. "Marriage without fortune must be a hell!"

He looked at Caroline to see if she were moved by such a declaration. She was quite passive; she had renounced marriage sincerely and irrevocably.

The Duke, wishing to judge whether she was armed against the idea of an irreparable fault, added, in order to compromise nothing too gravely, "Yes, it must be a hell except in the case of a great passion which gives the heroism to undergo everything."

Caroline was still just as calm and apparently a stranger to the question.

"Ah! my son, what nonsense are you preaching now? There are days when you talk like a child."

"But you know well enough that I am very much of a child," said the Duke; "and I hope to be so for a long time to come."

"It is being altogether too much so to rest the chances of happiness in misery," said the Marchioness, who courted discussion. "There is no such thing; misery kills all, even love."

"Is that your opinion, Mlle. de Saint-Geneix?" rejoined the Duke.

"O, I have no opinion on the sub-

ject," she replied. "I know nothing of life beyond a certain limit, but should be led in this instance to believe with your mother rather than with you. I have known misery, and if I have suffered it was in seeing its weight upon those whom I loved. There is no need therefore, of extending and complicating one's life when it is already so perplexing. That would be to go in search of despair."

"Bless me! everything is relative," exclaimed the Duke. "That which is the misery of some is the opulence of others. Would you not be very rich with an income of twelve thousand francs?"

"Certainly," replied Caroline, without remembering and perhaps even without knowing that to be the exact amount of her questioner's yearly allowance.

"Well, then," continued the Duke, who endeavored to inspire a hope with one word, that he might crush it with the next, — still intent upon his plan of agitating this placid or timid heart — "if any one should offer you such a modest competence as that, together with a sincere love?"

"I could not accept," Caroline rejoined. "I have four children to support and rear; no husband would accept such a past as that."

"She is charming," cried the Marchioness; "she speaks of her past like a widow."

"Ah! I did not speak of the widow my poor sister. With myself and an old woman-servant, who is attached to us, and who shall share the last morsel of bread in the house, we are severally neither more nor less. Now do you know the young man to marry with his twelve thousand francs a year? I think decidedly he would make a very bad bargain."

Caroline always spoke of her situation with an unaffected cheerfulness which showed the sincerity of her nature.

"Well, in point of fact, you are right," said the Duke. "You will get through life better all alone with you fine, brave spirit. I believe, indeed, that you and I are the only persons in the world who are really philosophers. I regard poverty as nothing when one

is responsible only to his own free will, and I must say that I was never before so happy as I am now."

"So much the better, my son," said the Marchioness, with an almost imperceptible shade of reproach, which the Duke, however, perceived in an instant, for he hastened to add, —

"I shall be completely happy the day my brother makes the marriage in question, and he will make it, will he not, dear mother?"

Caroline was on the point of going to examine the clock.

"No, no, it is not slow; it is just right," said the Marchioness. "We have no secrets from you hereafter, dear little one, and you must know that I have to-day received good news relative to a great project which I have for my son. If I have not made use of your pretty hand in negotiating this matter, it is for reasons altogether different from that of distrust. Here, read us this letter, of which my elder son as yet knows nothing."

Caroline would have gladly refrained from looking thus in advance into the secrets of the family, and especially into those of the Marquis. She hesitated; "M. de Villemer is not here," she said; "I do not know that he, for his part, will approve of the entire confidence with which you honor me —"

"Yes, he will, certainly," answered the Marchioness. "If I had a doubt of it, I would not beg you to read it. Come, now begin, my dear."

There was nothing further to be said to the Marchioness. Caroline read as follows: —

"Yes, dear friend, it must and will succeed. True, the fortune of Mlle. de X—— is upwards of four millions at least, but she knows it, and is no prouder on that account. On the contrary, after a new attempt on my part, she said to me no later than this morning, 'You are right, dear godmother; I have the power and the privilege to enrich a man of true merit. All you tell me of your friend's son gives me an exalted idea of him. Let me complete the time of my mourning at the convent, and I will consent to see him at your house the coming autumn.'

"It is well understood that in all this affair I have named no one, but your history and that of your two sons are so well known, that my dear Diana has divined. I did not think I ought to let pass the chance to make the excellent conduct of the Marquis do valuable service in the attainment of our object. The Duke, his brother, has himself proclaimed it everywhere, with a feeling which does him honor. Do not, therefore, prolong your retreat at Séval too far into the bad season. Diana must not see too much society before the interview. Society takes away, even from the most candid natures, that first freshness of faith and generosity, which I admire, and which I do my best to preserve in my noble godchild. You will continue my work, I know, when she is your daughter, my worthy friend. It is my most earnest wish to see your dear son recover the place in the world which is his due. To have lost it without a frown is fine in him, and the only finer thing which a person of lineage can do is to restore it to him. It is the duty of the daughters of gentle blood to give these grand examples of pride to the upstarts of the day, and as I am one of these daughters, I shall be satisfied with nothing short of success in this matter, putting all my heart in it, all my religion, all my devotion for you.

"DUCHESS DE DUNIÈRES,
née DE FONTARQUES."

The Duke could have scrutinized Caroline after the reading of this letter, in which her voice never once grew weak; he would not have detected in her the least effort, the least personal feeling which was not in harmony with the satisfaction felt by himself; but he never thought of observing her. In presence of a family affair so important, poor Caroline held a place quite secondary and accidental in his mind, and he would have reproached himself for thinking of her at all, when he saw in the future of his brother the providential reparation of the evil which he had caused. "Yes," he cried, joyfully kissing the hands of his mother, — "yes, you will be happy again, and I shall cease to blush. My brother shall be the man,

the head of the family. The whole world shall know his rare worth, for without fortune, in the eyes of the majority, talent and virtue are not sufficient. He will then be master of everything, this dear brother, glory, honor, credit, power, and all in spite of those little fine gentlemen of the citizen court, and without bending at all before the pretended necessities of politics. Mother, have you shown this letter to Urbain?"

"Yes, my son, to be sure."

"And he is satisfied? Things are already so far under way, the lady prepossessed in his favor, accepting in advance, and asking only to see him —"

"Yes, my friend, he has promised to allow himself to be introduced."

"Victory!" cried the Duke. "Then let us be gay, let us do something foolish! I want to jump up to the ceiling, I want to embrace some one, it makes no matter whom! Dear mamma, will you let me go and embrace my brother?"

"Yes, but do not congratulate him too much; he is startled at anything new, you understand?"

"O, never fear; I know him."

And the Duke, still very nimble in spite of his tendency to stoutness and the more or less damaged state of his joints, went out gambolling like a school-boy.

X.

HE found the Marquis absorbed in his work. "Do I disturb you? So much the worse!" cried the Duke. "I must embrace you. My mother has just read me the letter from the Duchess de Dunières."

"But, my friend, the marriage is not yet arranged," replied the Marquis, while he submitted to the fraternal hugging.

"It is arranged if you wish it, and you cannot be opposed to it."

"My friend, I might perhaps wish it ever so much. I would still have to be simply charming to sustain the brilliant reputation which that old Duchess has made for me, a great deal too much at your expense, I am inclined to think."

"The Duchess has done just right, except only that she has not said

enough. I should like to go to her and let her know everything. He believes that he is not charming! See how little he knows himself!"

"I know myself too well," rejoined M. de Villemer; "I am not mistaken."

"The deuce take! Do you consider yourself a bear? You were attractive enough to Madame de G——, the most reserved person in the world."

"Ah! I pray you do not speak of her; you remind me of all I suffered before I could inspire her with confidence in me, — all I afterwards suffered lest that confidence should from moment to moment be withdrawn. Look here!" added the Marquis, slightly forgetting himself; "people who are subject to strong passion have no reason. You do not know that, for you attract at first sight, and besides you do not seek for an exclusive love which shall endure for a lifetime. I know but one word to say to a woman, — *I love*, and if she does not understand that my whole soul is in that word, I could never add another."

"Well, then, you will love Diana de Xaintrailles, and she will understand that supreme word of yours."

"But suppose I should not love her?"

"O my dear fellow, she is charming. I saw her when she was quite little; she was a very cherub."

"Every one, I know, calls her charming; but what if she does not please me? Do not tell me that it is not necessary to adore one's wife, — that it suffices to esteem her and know her to be agreeable. I do not want to argue on that subject; it would be throwing away time. Let us confine ourselves to the question of my pleasing her. If I do not love, I do not know how to make myself loved, and therefore I shall not marry."

"One would indeed think you expect and depend upon that!" exclaimed the Duke with real sorrow. "Ah! our poor mother, who is so happy in her hope! And I, who believed myself absolved by destiny! Urbain, must it be then that we are under a curse, all three of us?"

"No," replied the Marquis, deeply moved; "let us not despair. I am working to modify my timid, unsociable

character. Upon honor, I am working with all my power for that end. I want to put an end to this agitated, sterile existence. Give me the summer to triumph over my memories, my doubts, my apprehensions; true, I want to make you happy, and God perhaps will come to my aid."

"Thank you, brother; you are the best of beings!" responded the Duke, embracing him again. And as the Marquis was much agitated, he led him forth to walk, in order to divert his mind from his work and to fortify him in his good intentions.

The Duke did then what Urbain had done to conquer him on the day of their first real intimacy. He represented himself weak and suffering as a means of restoring his brother's strength and courage. He gave vivid expression to his remorse and spoke feelingly of the need he had of moral support. "Two unhappy people can do nothing for each other," he said; "your melancholy has its fatal rebound on me, and overcomes me. The day when I see you happy, real energy and the joy of living will return to me."

Urbain, touched by these words, renewed his promise, and, as it cost him dearly, he forced it from his mind by leading his brother's talk to lively subjects; this did not take long, for the Duke required but little encouragement to return to the theme which had lately been absorbing so much of his time and thought.

"Come," he said, seeing his brother smile, "you will bring me happiness in everything. I am reminded now that for some days I have had a vexation intense enough in all conscience; it has made me sullen, awkward; my mind has been clouded; I could not see my way clearly. I have been frightfully stupid. I am sure that I shall now recover my faculties."

"Again some story of a woman?" asked the Marquis, mastering a vague and sudden uneasiness.

"And what would you want it to be? That little De Saint-Geneix occupies my mind more perhaps than she ought."

"It is exactly what she ought not to do," quickly replied the Marquis.

"Have you not given your oath to our

mother? She told me you had. Have you deceived mother?"

"No, not at all; but I should like very much to be compelled to deceive her."

"Compelled? I have no idea what you mean."

"Dear me! Well, this is just what I mean." And the Duke gave his brother a detailed account of how he had at first told a falsehood when he announced himself in love with Caroline, from the commendable motive of getting Urbain himself in love with her; how, seeing that he had not succeeded, he had conceived the plan of making her love him, without loving her; and how at last he had fallen sincerely in love with her himself, without a surty that his feeling was returned. Nevertheless, he added that he counted upon victory if he could only have the courage not to declare himself; and he said all this in terms so delicate or so ambiguous that the Marquis could not give him a moral lecture about it without making himself ridiculous. Then, when the latter, recovering from his stupefaction, attempted to speak of the repose of his mother and the dignity of their domestic life, not daring in his distress to say anything whatever of the respect due to Caroline, the Duke, becoming impressed with a sudden fear that his brother might think it his duty to give her warning, swore that he would do nothing to tempt her, but that if of her own accord she threw herself bravely into his arms at any given moment, without conditions and without calculation, he was ready to marry her. Was he sincere then? Yes, probably, as he had always been, when eagerness had given the appearance of possibility to what passion had afterward caused him to evade.

As his brother spoke from a kind of conviction, the Marquis dared not express himself against this unlooked-for repetition of offence in the strange project. He knew that their mother did not expect to make an advantageous marriage for the one of her sons who no longer offered a guaranty of character, and the Duke proved to him by arguments cogent enough that he alone was the master of his future, to whom am-

bition was no longer permitted. "You see," he said, in conclusion, "that all this is very serious. I attempted once more to lay a snare, I will confess to you, but I did not expect to profit by it; it was merely a game without results. I was taken in my own net, and I suffer for it a great deal. I do not ask you to aid me, but I prohibit you in the name of our friendship from influencing any one about us; for, if you frighten Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, you will exasperate me perhaps, and I no longer answer for anything; or, if you succeed in making me renounce her, it is she who, exasperated, will perhaps commit some folly in the estimation of my mother. Since things are so situated that they can be cleared up only by some unforeseen circumstance, do not interfere in any way, and be certain that I shall conduct myself, come what may, in a manner to reassure your delicacy and to conflict neither with our mother's peace nor with the proprieties of the hospitality which you extend to me."

XI.

DURING this conversation, so painful to the Marquis, Caroline was having a talk with the Marchioness, which, without disturbing her so much, was by no means cheering to her. The Marchioness, full of her project, showed her young favorite a depth of family ambition, which the latter had never suspected. What she had loved and admired in the Marchioness was the chivalrous disinterestedness and resignation to the loss of wealth and to the actual state of things which had struck her so forcibly; but now she was compelled to modify her impressions, and to recognize the fact that this unselfish philosophy was only a fine costume gracefully worn. The Marchioness, however, was not a hypocrite; a person as communicative as she was had little or no premeditation, good or bad; she yielded to the sway of the moment, and did not think herself illogical in saying that she would rather die of famine than see one of her sons do a mean thing to enrich himself, but that, never-

theless, dying of famine was very hard, that her own present condition was a life of privation, while that of the Marquis was a purgatory; and finally, that one cannot be happy unless, along with honor and the pride of a blameless conscience, one has an income of at least two hundred thousand francs.

Caroline ventured to make a few general objections, which the Marchioness quickly repulsed. "Should not," she asked, "the sons of great families lead those of all other classes of society? This is a religion which you ought to have, — you, who are of good family. You ought to understand that gentlefolks have demands upon them — demands legitimate or, perhaps, obligatory — for a very large liberality, and that the higher the position these persons hold, the more it is required of them to possess a fortune on a level with their natural elevation. I suffer bitterly, I assure you, when I see the Marquis settling accounts himself with his farmers, busying himself about certain inevitable wastings, and even, if necessary, descending to the details of my kitchen. To one knowing our distress, it seems admirable in him to be tormenting himself thus that I may want for nothing; but with those who have no correct idea of this, we must certainly pass for misers, and so fall to the level of the lower classes!"

"Since you suffer so much," said Caroline, "from what I have considered an easy life, a very honorable one, and even a very noble one, God grant that this marriage may succeed, for you would have to renew your store of courage in case of any obstacle. Nevertheless, if I may be permitted to have an opinion —"

"One should always have opinions. Speak, my dear child."

"Well, then, I should say that it would be safest and wisest to accept the present state of affairs as quite endurable, without, on that account, giving up the marriage in question."

"And what signify disappointments, my poor little one? You fear that I shall have them? They do not kill, and hopes give us life. But why do you doubt the fulfilment of mine?"

"O, I do not doubt it," replied Caro-

line; "why should I have any doubts, if Mlle. de Xaintrailles is as perfect as she is said to be?"

"She is perfect, as you can very well see, since she decides in favor of personal merit, contenting herself with her own wealth."

"That does not seem to me very difficult," thought Caroline; but she was not inclined to make any audible rejoinder, and the Marchioness proceeded: "Besides, she is a Xaintrailles! Only think, my dear, of the prestige of such a name! Do you not see that a person of that blood, if she is fine at all, cannot be so by halves? Come, you are not sufficiently convinced of the excellence that comes to us by descent. I believe I have noticed this in you before. You have, perhaps, philosophized a little too much about it. Distrust all these new ideas and the pretensions of these self-made gentlemen! They may say and do what they will, but a man of low origin will never be truly noble at heart; a sordid weight of prudence and parsimony will always cling to him, like a birth-mark, and stifle his finer impulses. You will never see him sacrifice his fortune and his life for an idea, for his religion, for his prince, or for his honorable name. He may do brilliant deeds from a love of glory; but there will always be a personal interest in it some way; so do not be at all deceived by it."

Caroline felt wounded at the infatuation which the Marchioness professed to feel for the patrician orders. She found means to change the subject of the conversation; but, while they were at dinner, she was absorbed in the idea that her old friend, her tender adopted mother, assigned her unceremoniously to a place among these second-class families. The Marchioness had thought that she might speak thus before a gentleman's daughter, having the feelings proper to her class and therefore imbued with good principles; but Caroline said to herself, and very reasonably, too, that her claims to nobility were slight, questionable, perhaps. Her ancestors, who were provincial magistrates, had been ennobled in the reign of Louis XIV.; her father, without great presumption, had therefore assumed the

title of knight. She saw plainly, then, that the disdain of the Marchioness for the lower classes was a question of degree, and that a girl who was poor and of the lesser nobility was, in her eyes, twice her inferior in all respects.

This discovery did not awaken a foolish sensitiveness in Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, but her natural sense of justice revolted against a prejudice so solemnly imposed as a duty upon her belief. "So," said she to herself, "my life of misery, of self-sacrifice, of courage, and of cheerfulness withal, even my voluntary renunciation of all the joys of life, are nothing to the heroism of a Xaintrailles, who consents to be contented with two hundred thousand francs a year, that she may marry an accomplished man! It is because she is a Xaintrailles that her choice is sublime, and because I am only a Saint-Geneix, my sacrifice is a thing vulgar and obligatory!"

Caroline repelled these thoughts of wounded self-respect, but they traced a slight furrow on her expressive face, in passing. A beauty which is true and fresh can hide nothing. The Duke observed this trace of secret melancholy and ingenuously attributed it to himself. His delusion increased when he saw that in spite of her efforts to maintain her usual cheerfulness, Mlle. de Saint-Geneix grew more and more thoughtful. The real cause was this: Caroline had, exactly as was her wont, addressed to the Marquis certain questions about the household accounts, and he, usually so polite, had compelled her to repeat them. She thought that he, too, must be absent-minded or ill at ease; but two or three times she met a glance from him, which was cold, haughty, almost contemptuous. Chilled with surprise and terror, she suddenly became dejected and was obliged to attribute her state of mind to a headache.

The Duke had a vague suspicion of the truth so far as his brother was concerned; but this suspicion was dissipated when he saw the latter suddenly recover his gayety. He did not imagine the alternations of depression and reaction through which this troubled soul was passing, and, thinking he might now with impunity bestow atten-

tion upon Caroline, "You are not well," said he, "I see that you are really suffering! Mother, do have a care; Mlle. de Saint-Geneix has been looking pale for some time past."

"Do you think so?" asked the Marchioness, looking at Caroline with some interest. "Are you ill, my darling? Do not conceal it from me."

"I am remarkably well," said Caroline. "It is true that I feel to-day a somewhat unusual desire for fresh air and sunshine; but it is nothing at all."

"But it is something, though," returned the Marchioness, regarding her attentively, "and the Duke is right. You are very much changed. You must go take the fresh air at once, or retire to your room, perhaps. It is too warm here. I expect a whole company of neighbors this evening. I have no need of you; I give you a holiday."

"Do you know what will restore you?" asked the Duke of poor Caroline, now thoroughly vexed by the attention of which she was the object: "you ought to ride horseback. The little rustic quadruped that I told you about is gentle and strong. Would you like to try him?"

"All alone?" demanded the Marchioness; "and a horse not properly trained?"

"I am sure that Mlle. Caroline would be amused," said the Duke. "She is brave, she is afraid of nothing, as I very well know. Besides, I will have an eye to her myself; I will answer for her."

He insisted so much, that the Marchioness asked Caroline if this horseback ride would be really to her taste.

"Yes," she replied, impelled by the necessity of escape from the oppression which was wellnigh crushing her. "I am just childish enough to be amused in that way; but some other day will do better. I have no wish to make a display of my riding before the people whom you expect, especially as my first appearance is likely to be very awkward."

"Well, then, you shall go into the park," said the Marchioness; "it is deeply shaded, so that no one can witness your first attempt; but I want somebody to follow you on horseback,

— old André, for instance. He is a good squire, and has a staid nag, for which you can exchange yours, if he is too unruly."

"Yes, yes, that's it!" exclaimed the Duke. "André on old Blanche, that is perfect. I will superintend the start myself, and all will go well."

"But a side-saddle?" interposed the Marquis, apparently indifferent to this equestrian project.

"There is one; I saw it in the saddle-room," replied the Duke, quickly. "I will run and arrange all that."

"And a riding-habit?" said the Marchioness.

"The first long skirt will be sufficient," said Caroline, suddenly bent upon braving the hostile air of the Marquis and upon escaping from his presence. The Marchioness bade her make her preparations, and, leaning upon the arm of her second son, she went to meet her visitors as they arrived.

When Mlle. de Saint-Geneix came down the winding staircase from her room in the little tower, she found the horse already saddled, and held by the Duke in person before the small arched door which looked out on the lawn. André was there also, mounted upon an old cabbage-carting nag of proverbial leanness and very miserably accoutred, for everything belonging to the stable was in complete disorder. Confined strictly to what was necessary, even necessary things had not as yet been put into order. The Marquis, more embarrassed in his circumstances than he was willing to confess, intrenched himself behind the habit of blaming his own negligence, while the Duke, suspecting the truth, had declared that, for his own part, he preferred hunting on foot, as a check to his tendency to corpulence.

To equip Jacquet (that was the name of the farm-colt, raised twelve hours ago to the dignity of saddle horse) had been no small undertaking, and André, bewildered by this sudden fancy, would not have been prompt in finding the side-saddle and putting it in a condition for use. The Duke had done everything himself, in a quarter of an hour, with the swiftness and skill of a prac-

used hand. He was in a lively perspiration, and Caroline was confused enough to see him holding the stirrup for her, arranging the curb, and tightening the girths as if he had been a jockey by profession, laughing at the incongruity of things, and playing his part gayly, while he paid her all the hundred little attentions which a fraternal prudence could dictate.

When Mlle. de Saint-Geneix had started off on a trot, after having thanked him cordially and begged him not to be anxious about her, the Duke dismissed André, nimbly mounted the beast of the cabbage cart, plunged the spurs into his sides, and resolutely followed Caroline into the shadows of the park.

"What! is that you?" said she to him, stopping after the first gallop. "You, your Grace the Duke, mounted in that fashion, and taking the trouble to escort me! No, that cannot be. I will not have it; let us go back again."

"Why, how so?" he asked. "Are you afraid to be alone with me now? Have we not met each other here in these avenues at all hours, and have I ever annoyed you with my eloquence?"

"No, certainly not," said Caroline, with entire confidence. "I have no such whims as that, you know very well; but that horse of yours, — it is a torture to you."

"Are you comfortable on yours?"

"Perfectly."

"In that case we could not be better suited. As for myself, I take great delight in riding this white nag. See! Don't I look as well as I should upon a blooded steed? Down with all prejudice; let us amuse ourselves with a gallop!"

"But what if this creature's legs should give out?"

"Bah! it will do well enough. And if it does break my neck, why, I shall have the extreme happiness of knowing that it happens in your service."

The Duke lanced this bit of flattery with a tone of gayety which could not alarm Caroline. They set out on a gallop and made the circuit of the park quite bravely. Jacquet behaved excellently, showing no vicious inclinations of any kind; besides, Mlle. de Saint-

Geneix was a good rider, and the Duke noticed that she was as graceful as she was skilful and self-possessed. She had improvised a long skirt by dexterously letting down a hem; she had thrown over her shoulders a jacket of white dimity, and her little straw gardening-hat on her blond curls, dishevelled by the race, was wonderfully becoming. Animated by the pleasure of the ride, she looked so remarkably beautiful that the Duke, following with his eye the elegant moulding of her form, and the brilliant smile which played about her candid mouth, felt himself dazzled by them. "The devil take the oath which I let them get from me so unsuspectingly!" said he to himself. "Who would have thought I should have so much trouble in keeping it?" But it was necessary that Caroline should be the first to betray herself, and the Duke led her slowly around the park again to let the horses breathe, but all to no purpose; she chatted with a witty freedom and general good-humor, which did not admit the idea of any painful agitation.

"O, so, that is it?" thought he, as they recommenced their gallop. "You imagine that I am going to dislocate my joints on this Apocalyptic beast to converse just as we should under the maternal eye? Some one else may try it for all me! I am going to sadden your tranquil gratitude by a retreat which will give you material for reflection."

"My dear friend," said he to Caroline, — he sometimes allowed himself to use this expression in a tone of easy good-nature, — "you are very sure of Jacquet now, are you not?"

"Perfectly sure."

"He is not at all inclined to shy, and is not hard-bitted?"

"Not at all."

"Very well, if you are willing, I will leave you to yourself, and send André in my place."

"Do so, do so by all means!" replied Caroline, quickly; "or don't send any one at all. I will go around the park once more, and then I will take the animal back to André. Really, I shall enjoy cantering alone, and it pains me to see you so frightfully jolted."

"O, it is not that," responded the

Duke, resolved upon a bold stroke. "I'm not yet so old as to be afraid of a hard horse; but I remember that Madame d'Arglade is coming to-night."

"Not to-night; to-morrow."

"That is not certain," said the Duke, watching for the effect his words might produce.

"O, then, perhaps you are better informed than I am."

"Perhaps, my dear friend! Madame d'Arglade — In fact, it is sufficient —"

"Ah! indeed?" replied Caroline, laughing: "I did not know. Go quickly, then; I shall escape, and — a thousand thanks again for your kindness."

She was about to start her horse, but the Duke detained her. "What I am doing now is not polite, to say the least of it."

"It is better than polite; it is very good of you."

"O, then you have had enough of my company?"

"That is not what I mean. I say that your impoliteness is a proof of your confidence in me, and that I take it as such."

"Do you think she is pretty, — Madame d'Arglade, I mean?"

"Very pretty."

"How old is she, precisely?"

"Very nearly my own age. We were together at the convent."

"I know it. Were you great friends?"

"No, not exactly; but she has shown much interest in me since my misfortunes."

"Yes, it was she who was the means of bringing you here. Why did you detest each other at the convent?"

"We did not detest each other; we were not very intimate, — that was all."

"And now?"

"Now she is kind to me, and consequently I like her."

"Then you like people who are kind to you?"

"Is not that natural?"

"Then you like me a little, for it seems to me that I am not unkind to you myself?"

"Certainly, you are excellent, and I like you very much."

"Just hear how she says that! I

love my nurse dearly, but I love to ride on my rocking-horse better still! Come, tell me, you don't mean to prejudice your little friend D'Arglade against me, do you?"

"Prejudice her against you! There are some words in your vocabulary which do not get into mine."

"Yes, that is true, I beg pardon. It is because — you see, she is suspicious — she may question you. You will not fail to tell her that I have never made love to you?"

"O, as to that, count upon her knowing the truth," replied Caroline, starting. And the Duke heard her laugh as she rode off at full speed.

"There!" said he to himself, "I have lied, and it is trouble wasted. I have made a precious blunder, have n't I? She doesn't love any one, — or else she has a little lover somewhere, in reserve against the day when a thousand crowns shall be forthcoming to set up housekeeping with. Poor girl! If I had them, I would give them to her! It's all the same; I have been ridiculous. Perhaps she saw it too. Perhaps she will laugh at me with her 'dear friend,' when she writes to him secretly, for she does write a great deal. If I did think so! — But I have given my word of honor."

The Duke withdrew, trying to laugh at himself, but annoyed at losing his game, and almost angry.

Just as he was leaving the wood, he saw a man gliding into it cautiously. The evening had come; he could distinguish nothing about this man except his furtive movements, in trying to penetrate the thicket. "Stop, stop," thought he, "this is perhaps the lover in question, coming to make a mysterious visit. By Jove! I will be satisfied on that point! I will know who it is!" He dismounted, gave a vigorous blow with his riding-whip to Blanche, who needed neither urging nor guiding to take the road to her stable, and stole away under the trees in the direction which Caroline had taken. It would have been almost impossible to find the man in the coppice, and besides there was the risk of giving him the alarm. To walk noiselessly in the dark shadows, along the walk, and to see how these

two persons would meet and conduct themselves was, he considered, by far the surest course.

Caroline had already ceased thinking at all about the Duke. After having becomingly withdrawn to avoid disclosures hardly proper for her to hear, and which had astonished her coming from the lips of a man so well bred, she had brought the little horse down to a slow pace, lest she might come in contact with the boughs in the darkness. And, indeed, she felt inclined rather to think her own thoughts just then than to ride at greater speed. An absorbing anxiety weighed upon her mind. The attitude of the Marquis toward her was inexplicable and almost offensive. She searched for the cause of this in the most secret recesses of her conscience, and finding nothing there amiss, she reproached herself for thinking so much about it. He was perhaps subject to certain whims, like many people absorbed in great tasks; and after all, even if she had become displeasing to him, was he not about to be married, and would not the joy of the Marchioness be so complete that a poor young lady companion could leave her without ingratitude?

While she was thus thinking of her future, promising herself that she would speak about it to Madame d'Arglade, who would perhaps aid her in finding another situation, her horse was stopped suddenly, and she saw before her a man whose movements frightened her.

"Is it you, André?" asked she, as she perceived that her horse seemed to be obeying a well-known hand. And as there was no answer and she could distinguish nothing of the clothes worn by the person confronting her, she added, quickly and anxiously, "Is it you, your Grace the Duke? Why do you stop me?"

She received no reply; the man had disappeared; the horse was free. She was overcome by a vague fear, and, not daring to turn round, she urged Jacquet forward, and returned to the house on a gallop without seeing any one.

The Duke was ten paces off when this singular encounter took place. He saw nothing, but heard the frightened voice of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix at the moment

of the horse's sudden stop. He sprang forward, and finding himself face to face with an unknown person, he seized him by the collar, demanding, "Who are you?"

The unknown person struggled vigorously to escape from this investigation; but the Duke, who was a very powerful man, dragged his adversary out of the wood into the path. There, what was his ineffable surprise to recognize his brother!

"Heavens! Urbain," cried he, "did I not strike you? It seems to me that I did. But why didn't you answer me?"

"I don't know," replied M. de Villemer, much agitated. "I did not recognize your voice! Did you speak to me? Whom did you take me for, then?"

"For a robber, in sober earnest! Did you not frighten Mlle. de Saint-Geneix just now?"

"I perhaps frightened her horse, unintentionally. Where is she?"

"Why, she was afraid and took to flight. Did you not hear her riding off toward the house?"

"And why should she have been afraid of me?" rejoined the Marquis, with singular bitterness. "I did not wish to offend her." And then, weary of deception, he added, "I merely wanted to speak to her!"

"About whom? About me?"

"Yes, perhaps. I wanted to know whether she loved you."

"And why didn't you speak to her?"

"I do not know. I could not say a word to her."

"Are you in pain?"

"Yes. I am ill, very ill, to-day."

"Let us go in, brother," said the Duke. "I see that you are in a fever, and the dew is falling."

"No matter!" said the Marquis, seating himself on a block at the edge of the walk. "I wish I was dead!"

"Urbain!" cried the Duke, a sudden light striking him at last; "it is you who are in love with Mlle. de Saint-Geneix!"

"I in love with her? Is she not, — is she not yours?"

"Never, since you love her! On my part it was only a caprice, an idle,

selfish vanity; but, as truly as I am my father's son, she has not the least inclination toward me; she has just simply understood nothing of my artifices; she is as pure, as free, and as proud as on the day she came among us."

"Why did you leave her alone in this wood after you had brought her out into it?"

"Ah! you suspect me after the solemn assertion that I have just made! Can it be that love is making you insane?"

"You have played with your promise about this young lady. For you, in questions of gallantry, oaths count nothing; I know that. If it were otherwise, would you and your fortunate compeers be able to persuade so many women? Do you not know how to slip away from all engagements? Was it honorable, this absurd manœuvring,—which may have been very skilfully done for aught I know about such games,—to draw her into your arms through fascination, through spite, through all the weak or bad impulses in woman's nature? Is there anything that you do respect? Is not virtue, in your eyes, an infirmity of which a poor innocent girl, helpless and inexperienced, must be cured? Is not the abyss into which you want to see her fling herself, in your opinion, the rational condition, fortunate or fatal, of a girl without a dowry and without an ancestry? See! did you not mock me this very morning, when you wished to persuade me that you would marry her? And this is what you said only a moment ago: 'It is you who are in love with her. For me, it was only a fancy, an idle, selfish vanity.' Come, it is frightful,—this libertine vanity of yours! It drags down into the mire all that comes near you! Your very gaze soils a woman, and it is too much for me already that this girl has undergone the insult of your thoughts. I love her no longer."

Having spoken thus to his brother for the first time in his life, the Marquis rose and strode away from him swiftly with a kind of gloomy hatred and with a curse seemingly irrevocable.

The Duke, beside himself, arose im-

mediately to demand satisfaction. He even took a few steps in pursuit of his brother, then stopped abruptly and returned, throwing himself down on the spot which Urbain had just left. He was the victim of a terrible conflict, irritated, furious, he still felt that the person of the Marquis was sacred to him; he was not in the habit of rendering to himself a just account of his own faults, and yet in spite of himself, he felt none the less overwhelmed by the language of truth. He wrung his hands convulsively, and great tears of rage and grief flowed down his cheeks.

André came to find him, having been sent by his mother. The visitors were gone, but Madame d'Arglade had arrived. They were astonished not to see him. The Marchioness, knowing that he had ridden Blanche, was afraid that the unfortunate horse might have been crushed under him.

He followed the servant mechanically, and asked, just as he was going into the house, "Where is M. de Villemer?"

"In his room, your Grace. I saw him go in."

"And Mlle. de Saint-Geneix?"

"She has also gone to her room; but Madame the Marchioness has informed her of the arrival of Madame d'Arglade, and she will come down again soon."

"Very good! Go tell M. de Villemer that I wish to speak with him. In ten minutes I will go up to his room."

XII.

MADAME D'ARGLADE was the wife of a great provincial dignitary. She had obtained an introduction to the Marchioness de Villemer at the South, when the latter was passing the summer there upon a large estate, since sold to pay the debts of her eldest son. Madame d'Arglade had that particular kind of narrow and persevering ambition of which certain wives of officials, small or great, furnish quite remarkable specimens. To rise in order to shine, and to shine in order to rise,—that was the sole thought, the sole dream, the sole talent, the sole principle of this

little woman. Rich, and without an ancestry to boast of, she had bestowed her dowry upon a ruined noble to serve as security for a place in the department of finance, and to add splendor to her house; for she understood perfectly well that, in that condition of life, the best way to acquire a large fortune was to begin by having one suitable to her position and by spending it liberally. Plump, active, pretty, cool, and adroit, she considered a certain amount of coquetry as a duty of her station, and secretly prided herself upon the lofty science which consists in promising with the eyes but never with the pen or the lips, in making transient impressions, but calling forth no abiding attachments, and, lastly, in gaining her objects by surprise, without appearing to hold them, and never descending to ask for them, that she might find herself supported on all occasions by useful friends, she gathered them up everywhere, received every one with no great nicety of choice, with a well-acted good-nature or thoughtlessness, and, in fine, she penetrated skilfully into the most exclusive families and was not long in contriving to become indispensable to them.

It was thus that Madame d'Arglade had wormed herself into what was almost an intimacy with Madame de Villemer, in spite of the prejudice of that noble lady against her origin, her position, and the occupation of her husband; but Léonie d'Arglade paraded her own complete lack of political opinions, and dexterously went round begging pardon of every one for her utter incapacity and nothingness in this regard, — which was her expedient to shock no one, and to make people forget the compulsory zeal of her husband for the cause he served. She was gay, heedless, sometimes silly, laughing loudly at herself, but inwardly laughing at the simplicity of others, and managing to pass for the most ingenuous and disinterested creature in the world, while all her proceedings were based on calculation, and all her impulses were premeditated.

She had very well understood that a certain class of society, however divided in opinion it may be, is always held together by some indissoluble tie of

kinship or expediency, and that, upon occasion, all its shades of difference are blended by one animating spirit of caste or of common interest. She was quite well aware, then, that she needed acquaintance with the Faubourg St. Germain, where her husband was not usually admitted, and, thanks to Madame de Villemer, whose good-nature she had adroitly captivated by her prattle and untiring "availability," she had gained a foothold in certain drawing-rooms, where she pleased people and passed for an amiable child of no great consequence.

This child was already twenty-eight years old and did not appear more than twenty-two or twenty-three, although balls were a little fatiguing to her; she had managed to preserve so much engaging sauciness and simplicity that no one perceived her growing a trifle too fleshy. She showed her little dazzling teeth when she smiled, lisped in her speech, and seemed intoxicated with dress and pleasure. In fine, no one suspected her and perhaps there was really nothing to dread in her, since her first interest was to appear good-natured and to make herself inoffensive; but it required great exertion in any one who did not want to find himself suddenly entangled with her.

It was in this way that, without being on her guard and all the while declaring that she would take no step to influence the ministry of the citizen king, Madame de Villemer had found herself inveigled into affecting more or less directly Léonie's withdrawal from her province. Thanks to Madame de Villemer and to the Duke d'Aléria, M. d'Arglade had just received an appointment in Paris, and his wife had written to the Marchioness: —

"Dear Madame, I owe to you my life; you are my guardian angel. I quit the South, and I shall only touch at Paris; for, before establishing myself there, before beginning to rejoice and amuse myself, before everything, in a word, I want to go and thank you and prostrate myself before you at Séval for twenty-four hours, and tell you during those twenty-four hours how much I love you and bless you.

"I will be with you on the 10th of

June. Say to his Grace the Duke that it will be the 9th or the 11th, and that, in the mean time, I thank him for having been so kind to my husband, who is going to write him on his own account."

This pretended uncertainty as to the day of her arrival was, on the part of Madame d'Arglade, the graceful reception of a joke which the Duke had often made about the ignorance of days and hours that she always affected. The Duke, with all his cunning with regard to women, had been completely duped by Léonie. He thought her silly, and had a way of addressing her thus: "That's it! You are coming to see my mother to-day, Monday, Tuesday, or Sunday, the seventh, sixth, or fifth day of the month of November, September, or December, in your blue or gray or rose-colored dress, and you are going to honor us by supping, dining, or breakfasting with us, or with them, or with other people."

The Duke was not at all taken with her. She amused him, and the small talk and witticism which characterized his manner with her were merely as a mask for a sort of desultory groping about in the dark, which Madame d'Arglade pretended not to notice, but of which she knew very well how to keep clear.

When the Duke entered the presence of Madame d'Arglade and his mother, he was still much disturbed, and the change in his countenance struck the Marchioness. "Bless me!" cried she, "there has been some accident!"

"None at all, dear mother. Reassure yourself; everything has passed off finely. I have been a little cold, that is all."

He was really cold, although he had still on his brow the perspiration of vexation and anger. He drew near the fire which burned every evening, at all seasons of the year, in the drawing-room of the Marchioness; but, after a few moments, the habit of self-mastery, which is the whole science of fashionable life, and the brilliant pyrotechnics of Léonie's words and smiles, dispelled his bitterness.

Mlle. de Saint-Geneix now came forward to embrace her old companion at the convent. "Ah! but you are pale

too," said the Marchioness to Caroline. "You are concealing something from me! There has been some accident — I am sure of it — with those infernal beasts."

"No, Madame," replied Caroline, "none at all, I assure you, and, to relieve your anxiety, I will tell you everything: I have been very much frightened."

"Really? By what, pray?" asked the Duke; "it certainly was not by your horse?"

"Perhaps it was by you, your Grace. Come, was it you who stopped my horse for sport, while I was alone walking him slowly in the green avenue?"

"Well, yes, it was I," replied the Duke. "I wanted to see whether you were as brave as you seemed."

"And I was not. I ran like a terrified chicken."

"But you did not cry out, and you did not lose your presence of mind, — that's something."

They told Madame d'Arglade about the horseback ride. As was her custom, she pretended to take very little notice of what was said; but she lost not a word, and asked herself earnestly whether the Duke had deceived or wanted to deceive Caroline, and whether this combination might not be useful in some way at a future day. The Duke left the ladies together, and went up to his brother's room.

The reason why Caroline and Léonie were not intimate at the convent was the difference in their ages. Four years establish a very considerable barrier in youth. Caroline had not wished to tell the Duke the true reason, fearing to seem desirous to make her companion appear old, fully aware besides, that it is doing an ill-turn to most pretty women to recollect their ages too faithfully. It is also worth mention, that all the time Madame d'Arglade remained at Séval, she passed for the younger, and that Caroline, like a good girl, allowed this error of memory to go uncontradicted.

Caroline then, in reality, knew very little about her protectress; she had never met her since the time, when, as a child upon the benches of the "little class," she had seen Mlle. Léonie Le-compte emerge from the convent, eager

to marry some man of birth or position, regretting no one, but, already shrewd and calculating, bidding every one a tender farewell. Caroline and Camille de Saint-Geneix, at that period girls of gentle blood and comfortable fortune, might, she thought, be good acquaintances to find again at some future time. She wrote them, in a very compassionate tone, therefore, when she learned of their father's death. In her reply Caroline did not conceal the fact that she was left not only an orphan but penniless. Madame d'Arglade took good care not to desert her friend in her misfortunes. Other convent mates, of whom she saw more, had told her that both the Saint-Geneix were charming, and that, with her talents and beauty, Caroline would be sure to make a good match nevertheless, — the idle talk of inexperienced young women. Léonie thought, indeed, that they were mistaken; but she might try to marry off Caroline, and in that way find herself mixed up in confidential questions, and in intimate negotiations with divers families. From that time she thought of nothing but gaining many supporters, extending her relations everywhere, and obtaining the secrets of others while pretending to impart her own. She wanted to attract Caroline to her house in her province, offering her with a delicate grace, a refuge and a prospective home of her own. Caroline, touched by so much kindness, replied that she could not leave her sister, and did not wish to marry, but that if she should ever find herself painfully situated, she would appeal to Léonie's generous heart to seek out for her some modest employment.

From that time Léonie, always full of promises and praises, saw plainly that Caroline did not understand a life of expedients, and troubled herself no further about her, until some old friends, who perhaps pitied Caroline more sincerely, informed Léonie that she was seeking a place as governess in a quiet family, or as reader to some intelligent old lady. Léonie loved to use her influence, and always had something to ask for some one; it was an opportunity for her to get into notice, and to make herself agreeable. Finding herself in Paris

at the time, she made greater haste than any one else did, and in her search fell upon the Marchioness de Villemer, who had just then dismissed her reader. She wanted an elderly lady. Madame d'Arglade expatiated on the disadvantages of old age, which had made Esther so crabbed. She also diminished as much as she could the youth and beauty of Caroline. She was a girl about thirty, pretty enough in other days, but who had suffered and must have faded. Then she wrote to Caroline to describe the Marchioness, urging her to come quickly, and offering to share her own temporary lodgings in Paris with her. We have seen that Caroline did not find her at home, but introduced herself to the Marchioness, astonished the latter with her beauty, and charmed her with her frankness, doing by the charm and ascendancy of her appearance more than Léonie had ever hoped for her.

Upon seeing Léonie stout, flaunting, and shrewd, but having still preserved her girlish ways, and even exaggerated her childish lisp, Caroline was astonished and asked herself at first sight if all this was not affected; but she was soon to change her mind good-naturedly, and to share in the delusion of every one else. Madame d'Arglade was charmingly polite to her, and all the more so because she had already questioned the Marchioness about Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, and knew her to be well anchored in the good graces of the old lady. Madame de Villemer declared her perfect in all respects, quick and discreet, frank and gentle, of unusual intelligence and the noblest character. She had warmly thanked Madame d'Arglade for having procured her this "pearl of the Orient," and Madame d'Arglade had said to herself, "Well and good! I see that Caroline can be useful to me; she is so already. It is always well not to despise or neglect any one." And she overwhelmed the young lady with caresses and flatteries, which seemed as unstudied as the affectionate rapture of a school-girl.

Just before going to his brother's room, the Duke, who was resolved upon a reconciliation, walked for five minutes

on the lawn. Involuntary fits of wrath returned upon him, and he feared that he might not be master of himself, if the Marquis should renew his admonitions. At last he came to a decision, went up stairs, crossed a long vestibule, hearing his blood beat so loudly in his temples as to conceal the sound of his footsteps.

Urbain was alone at the farther end of the library, a long room in the ogive style, with slender arches, which his small lamp lighted but feebly. He was not reading; but hearing the approach of the Duke, he had placed a book before himself, ashamed of appearing unable to work.

The Duke stopped to look at him before saying a word. His dull paleness, and his eyes hollow with suffering, touched the Duke deeply. He was going to offer his hand, when the Marquis rose and said to him in a grave voice: "My brother, I offended you very much an hour ago. I was unjust probably, and, in any case, I had no right to remonstrate with you, — I who, having loved but one woman in my whole life, have yet been the guilty cause of her ruin and her death. I confess the absurdity, the harshness, the arrogance of my words, and I sincerely beg your pardon."

"Well, then, I thank you with all my heart," replied Gaëtan, taking him by both hands; "you are doing me a great kindness, for I had resolved to make an apology to you. The deuce take me, if I know what for! But I said to myself, that in wrestling with you under the trees, I must have excited your nerves. Perhaps I hurt you; my hand is heavy. Why didn't you speak to me? And then — and then — Come, I had been causing you much suffering, and perhaps for a long time, without knowing it; but I could not guess, — I ought to have suspected it, though, and I, too, sincerely beg your pardon for that, my poor brother. Ah! why did you lack confidence in me after what we had both solemnly promised?"

"Have confidence in you!" rejoined the Marquis; "do you not see that this is my greatest need, my keenest thirst, and that my wrath was only grief? I wept for it, this confidence

that was put in question, I wept bitter tears for it. Give it back to me; I cannot do without it."

"What must I do? Tell me, do tell me! I am ready to go through fire and water! It is only the trial by water which I beg you to spare. What if I should be called upon to drink it!"

"Ah! you laugh at everything; do you not see that you do?"

"I laugh — I laugh — because it is my way of being pleased, and from the moment you love me again, the rest is nothing. And then what is there so very serious? You love this charming girl. You are not wrong. Do you wish me never to speak to her, and never to meet her, or never to look at her? It shall be done, I swear it, and if this is not enough, I will set out to-morrow, or now, if you like, on Blanche. I don't see what worse thing I can do?"

"No, no, don't go away, don't desert me! Do you not see, Gaëtan, that I am dying?"

"My God! why do you say that?" cried the Duke, lifting up the shade of the lamp and looking his brother in the face; then he seized the hands of the Marquis, and, not finding the pulse readily, laid both his own on his brother's chest, and felt the disordered and uneven beating of the invalid's heart.

This disease had seriously threatened the life of the Marquis in his early youth. It had disappeared, leaving a delicate complexion, a great deal of nervous uneasiness, with sudden reactions of strength, but, on the whole, as great certitude of life as a hundred others have who are apparently more energetic, and really less finely tempered, less sustained by a healthy will and the power of discrimination. This time, however, the old disease had reappeared, with violence enough to justify the alarm of Gaëtan and to produce in his brother the oppression and the awful sensations of a death-agony.

"Not a word to my mother!" said the Marquis, rising and going to open the window. "It is not to-morrow that I shall sink under this. I have some strength still; I do not give myself up yet. Where are you going?"

"Why, I am going to get a horse. I am going for a physician."

"Where? For whom? There is not one here who knows my constitution so well as not to run a risk of killing me, should he undertake my case in the name of his logic. If I should fail, take care not to leave me to any village Esculapius, and remember that bleeding will carry me off as the wind carries away an autumn leaf. I was doctored enough ten years ago to know what I need, and I am in the habit of taking care of myself. Come, do not doubt this," added he, showing the Duke some powders prepared in doses, from a drawer in his bureau. "Here are quieting and stimulating medicines, which I know how to use variously. I perfectly understand my disease and its treatment. Be sure that, if I can be cured, I shall be cured, and that, to this end, I shall do all that ought to be done by a man who knows the extent of his duties. Be calm. It was my duty to tell you what I am threatened with, so that you might thoroughly forgive in your heart my feverish anger. Keep my secret for me; we must not uselessly alarm our poor mother. If the time to prepare her should arrive, I shall feel it and will give you warning. Until then, be calm, I beg of you!"

"Calm! It is you who must be calm," retorted the Duke, "and here you are fighting with a passion! It is passion that has awakened this poor heart physically as well as morally. It is love, it is happiness, enthusiasm, tenderness, that you need. Well, nothing is lost then. Tell me, do you wish her to love you, this girl? She shall love you. What am I saying? She does love you, she has always loved you, from the very first day. Now I recall the whole. I see plainly. It is you —"

"Stop, stop!" said the Marquis, falling back into his arm-chair. "I cannot hear it; it stifles me."

But after a momentary silence, during which the Duke watched him with anxiety, he seemed better, and said with a smile, which restored to his expressive face all its youthful charm, —

"And yet what you said then was true! It is perhaps love. Perhaps it is nothing else. You have soothed me with an illusion, and I have given my-

self up to it like a child. Feel of my heart now; it is refreshed. The dream has passed over it like a cool breeze."

"Since you are feeling better," said the Duke, after making sure that he was really calm, "you ought to make the most of it and try to sleep. You do not sleep, and that is dreadful! In the morning, when I start for a hunt, I often see your lamp still burning."

"And yet, for many nights past, I have not been at work."

"Well, then, if it is sleeplessness, you shall not keep watch alone; I will answer for that. Let me see; you are going to lie down, to lie down on your bed."

"It is impossible."

"Yes, I see: you would suffocate. Well, you shall sit up and sleep. I will stay close by. I will talk to you about her until you no longer hear me."

The Duke conducted his brother to his room, placed him in a large arm-chair, took care of him as a mother would take care of her child, and seated himself near him, holding his hand in his own. Then all Urbain's natural kindness returned, and he said, gratefully, —

"I have been hateful this evening. Tell me again that you forgive me."

"I do what is better: I love you," replied Gaëtan; "and I am not the only one, either. She is also thinking about you at this very hour."

"O Heaven! you are lying. You are lulling me with a celestial song; but you are lying. She loves no one; she will never love me!"

"Do you want me to go after her and tell her that you are seriously ill? I'll wager that in five minutes she would be here!"

"It is possible," replied the Marquis, with languid gentleness. "She is full of charity and devotedness; but it would be worse for me to ascertain that I had her pity — and nothing more."

"Bah! you know nothing about it. Pity is the beginning of love. Everything must begin with something which is not quite the middle or the end. If you would let yourself be guided by me, in a week you would see —"

"Ah! now you are doing me more harm still. If it were as easy as you

think to win her love, I should not long for it so ardently."

"Very well. The illusion would be dispelled. You would regain your peace of mind. That would be something at least."

"It would be my death, Gaëtan," resumed the Marquis, growing animated and recovering strength in his voice. "How unhappy I am that you cannot understand me! But there is an abyss between us. Take care, my poor friend, with an imprudence, or a slight levity, or a mistaken devotedness, you can kill me as quickly as if you held a pistol to my head."

The Duke was very much puzzled. He found the situation simple enough, between two persons more or less attracted toward each other and separated only by scruples, which had little importance in his eyes; but in his opinion, Urbain was complicating this situation by whimsical delicacy. If Mlle. de Saint-Geneix should accept him without really loving him, the Marquis felt that his own love for her would die, and in the loss of this love which was killing him, the thunderbolt would fall the quicker. This was a sort of blind alley which drove the Duke wellnigh to despair, but into which it was none the less necessary respectfully to follow his brother's wishes and ideas. By conversing longer with him, and sounding him to the very depths of his being, Gaëtan reached the conclusion that the only joy it was possible to give him would consist in aiding him to a knowledge of Caroline's affection and to a hope of its patient and delicate growth. So long as his imagination could wander through this garden of early emotions, romantic and pure, the Marquis was lulled by pleasant ideas and exquisite joys. As soon, however, as he saw the uncertain approach of the hour when he must decide upon his course and risk an avowal, he felt a dark presentiment of an inevitable disaster, and, unhappily for him, he was not mistaken. Caroline would refuse him and take to flight, or, if she should accept his hand, his aged mother would be driven to despair and perhaps sink under the loss of her illusions.

The Duke plunged deeply into these reflections, for Urbain began to drowse,

after having made him promise that he would leave to get some rest himself as soon as he should see him fairly asleep. Gaëtan was vexed at finding no way to be of real service to him. He would have liked to tell Caroline the danger, to appeal to her kindness and her esteem, asking her to humor the moral condition of the invalid, veiling the future to him, whatever it might be, and soothing him with vague hopes and faint dreams; but this would be pushing the poor girl down a very dangerous slope, and she was not so childish as not to understand that she would thus risk her reputation and probably her own peace of mind.

Destiny, which is very active in dramas of this kind, since it always meets with souls predisposed to yield to its action, did what the Duke dared not do.

XIII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the promise made to his brother, to inform no one of his condition, the Duke could not quite make up his mind to assume the dangerous responsibility of absolute silence. He believed in a doctor, whoever he might be, in spite of his assertion that he did not believe in medicine, and he resolved to go to Chambon and make arrangements with a young man there who did not appear to him to be lacking either in knowledge or prudence, one day when he himself had consulted him about a slight indisposition. Under the seal of secrecy he would confide the situation of the Marquis to this young physician, and engage him to come to the manor-house the next day, under the pretext of selling a bit of prairie enclosed in the lands of Séval. Then he would bring about a chance for the doctor to see the patient, if only to observe his face and general symptoms, without giving any professional advice; a way of submitting this advice to M. de Villemer would be found, and perhaps he would consent to follow it. In a word the Duke, who could not endure to watch through the loneliness and silence of the night, felt the need of doing something to calm his own

anxiety. He calculated that he could reach Chambon in a half-hour, and that an additional hour would give him time to rouse the physician, talk with him, and return. He could, he ought, to be back before his brother, who now seemed resting quietly, should awake from his first sleep.

The Duke withdrew noiselessly, left the house through the garden so as to be heard by no one, and descended quickly toward the bed of the river to a foot-bridge by the mill, and to a path which led him straight to the town. By taking a horse and following the road, he would have made a noise and gained very little time. The Marquis, however, did not sleep so soundly as not to hear him leave the room; but, knowing nothing of his project, and not wishing to hinder his brother from going to rest, he had pretended to be unconscious of everything.

It was then a little after midnight. Madame d'Arglade, after having taken her leave of the Marchioness, had followed Caroline to her room to have a little more talk with her. "Well now, pretty dear," she said, "are you really as well satisfied in this house as you say? Be frank with me, if anything troubles you here. Ah, bless me! there is always some little thing in the way. Take advantage of my presence now to confide it to me. I have some influence with the Marchioness, without having sought for it, to be sure; but she likes silly heads, and then I, who am naturally of a happy disposition, and never need anything for myself, — I have the right to serve my friends unhesitatingly."

"You are very good," replied Caroline; "but here everybody is good to me, too, and if I had anything to complain of I should speak of it quite freely."

"That's right, thank you," exclaimed Léonie, taking the promise as made to herself. "Well, now, how about the Duke? Has he never teased you, the handsome Duke?"

"Very little, and that is all over with now."

"Indeed, you give me pleasure by saying that. Do you know that after having written to you to engage you

for this place I felt a certain remorse of conscience? I had never spoken to you of this great conqueror."

"It is true you seemed to have a fear of speaking to me about him."

"A fear! no, I had entirely forgotten him; I am so giddy-headed! I said to myself, 'Heavens! I hope that Mlle. de Saint-Genève will not be annoyed by his artifices!' for he has his artifices and with everybody."

"He has had none with me, I am thankful to be able to say."

"Then all is well," replied Léonie, who did not believe a word of what she heard. She changed the subject to that of dress, and all at once she exclaimed, "O, bless me! how sleepy I am becoming! It must be on account of the journey. Till to-morrow, then, dear Caroline. Are you an early riser?"

"Yes; are you?"

"Alas! not much of a one; but when I do get my eyes open, say, between ten and eleven, I shall find you in your room, — shall I not?"

She retired, resolved to get up early in the morning, wander about everywhere as if by chance, and obtain a stealthy knowledge of all the most intimate details of the family affairs. Caroline followed her to install her in her apartment, and returned to her own little room, which was some distance from that of the Marquis, but whose casements, looking out on the lawn, were almost opposite to his.

Before going to rest, she put in order certain books and papers, for she studied a great deal, and with a genuine relish; she heard it strike one o'clock in the morning, and went to shut her blinds before disrobing. At that moment she heard a sharp stroke against the glass of the opposite casement, and her eyes, following the direction of the sound, saw a pane fall rattling from the lighted window of the Marquis. Astonished by this accident, and by the silence which followed, Caroline listened attentively. No one stirred; no one had heard it. Gradually, confused sounds reached her, feeble plaints at first, and then stifled cries and a species of rattle. "Some one is assassinating the Marquis," was her first thought, for the sinister murmurs came evidently from his room.

What should she do? Call, find some one, tell the Duke who lodged still farther away?—all that would take too much time, and, besides, under the oppression of such a warning there must be no indecision. Caroline measured the distance with her eye: there were twenty paces to go across the grass. If malefactors had penetrated to M. de Villemer's room it must have been by the stairs of the Griffin turret which was opposite to that of the Fox. These two cages with stairways in them bore the names of the emblems rudely sculptured on the tympana of their portals. The stairs of the Fox led away on this side from Caroline's room. No one else could arrive on the scene so soon as she could, and her solitary approach might cause the assassins to release the Marquis. In the Griffin turret there was besides the rope of a little alarm bell. She said all this to herself while running, and by the time she had finished saying it, she had reached this door, which she found open. The Duke had gone out there, intending to return in the same way without causing the hinges to creak, and thinking nothing about robbers, an unknown class in that country.

Caroline, however, all the more confirmed in the imaginary construction she had put upon the matter, bounded up the spiral stairway of stone. Hearing nothing at all there, she advanced along the passage, and stopped hesitating, before the door of the Marquis's apartment. She ventured to knock, but received no answer. There were certainly no assassins near her, yet what were the cries which she had heard? An accident of some kind, but undoubtedly a serious one, and one which made immediate assistance necessary. She pushed open the door, that was not even latched, and found M. de Villemer extended upon the floor, near the window which he had not had strength enough to open, and of which he had broken the glass to gain air, feeling himself overwhelmed by a sudden strangling.

The Marquis had not fainted. He had had the terrors of death; he now felt the return of his breathing and of life. As he had his face turned towards

the window, he did not see Caroline enter, but he heard her, and thinking it was the Duke, "Do not be alarmed," he said, in a feeble voice; "it is passing off. Aid me to rise, I have no longer the strength."

Caroline rushed forward and raised him up with the energy of an over-excited will. It was only when he found himself again in his chair that he recognized her, or thought he recognized her, for his sight, still dim, was crossed by blue waves, and his limbs were so cold and rigid that they were insensible to the touch of the arms and dress of Caroline.

"Heaven! is it a dream?" he said, with a sort of wildness. "You! is it you?"

"Yes, certainly it is I," she answered; "I heard you groan. What is the matter? What shall I do? Call your brother, must I not? But I dare not leave you again. How do you feel? What has happened to you?"

"My brother," rejoined the Marquis, rousing himself enough to recover his memory. "Ah! it was he who led you here. Where is he?"

"He is not about; he knows nothing of this."

"You have not seen him?"

"No, I will go and have him called."

"Ah! do not leave me."

"Well, then, I will not; but to aid you—"

"Nothing, nothing! I know what it is; it is nothing. Do not be alarmed; you see I am quiet. And—you are here!—and you knew nothing?"

"Nothing in the world. For some days I have found you changed—I thought, indeed, that you were ill, but I dared not be anxious—"

"And now at this moment—did I call you?—What—what did I say?"

"Nothing. You broke this window-pane in falling perhaps. Has it not wounded you?"

And Caroline, approaching the light, took up and examined the hands of the Marquis. The right one was quite badly cut: she washed away the blood, adroitly removed the particles of glass, and dressed the wound. Urbain submitted, regarding her with the mingled astonishment and tenderness of a man

who, picked up on the battle-field, discovers himself in friendly hands. He repeated feebly, "My brother, then, has told you nothing, — is it true?"

She did not at all understand this question, which seemed to have gained the fixedness of a diseased fancy, and to banish it she recounted to him, while binding up his hand, that she had believed him in the hands of assassins. "It was absurd, to be sure," she said, forcing herself to be cheerful; "but how could I help it? That fear took possession of me, and I ran hither, as to a fire, without informing any one."

"And if that had been really the case, you were coming here to expose yourself to danger?"

"Upon my word, I never thought of myself; I thought only of you and your mother. Nonsense! I would have helped you to defend yourself; I don't know how, or with what, but I would have found something; I would have made a diversion at any rate. There, your wound is dressed, and it will be nothing; but the other, what is the nature of it? You do not wish to tell me? Your friends must nevertheless know how to help you; your brother —"

"Yes, yes, the Duke knows all, my mother nothing."

"I understand you do not wish — I will tell her nothing; but you will permit me to be anxious; to try and find with the Duke what ought to be done to relieve you. I will not be troublesome. I know how one should be with those who suffer. I was the nurse of my poor father and of my sister's husband. See now, do not take it ill that I came here unwittingly and without reflection. You could have arisen from the floor yourself, I know very well; but it is a sad thing to suffer alone. You smile? Come, M. de Villemer, it seems to me that you are a little better. O, how much I want you to be!"

"I am in heaven," replied the Marquis, and, as he had no idea of the hour, "Stay a while longer," he said. "My brother watched with me a little this evening; he will return."

Caroline did not allow herself to make any objection; she simply did not consider at all what the Duke might think

when he found her there, or what the servants would say if they saw her going back to her room; in the presence of a friend in danger, the possibility of any insulting suspicion had not even occurred to her. She remained.

The Marquis wished to say more to her, but had not the strength. "Do not speak," she said. "Try to sleep; I solemnly promise that I will not leave you."

"What? You want me to sleep? But I cannot. When I fall asleep I strangle."

"And yet you are overcome with fatigue; your eyes close in your own despite. Well, now you must obey nature. If you have another severe attack I will help you to bear it; I shall be here."

The confidence and good-will of Caroline had a magical effect upon the invalid. He fell asleep and rested peacefully till day. Caroline had seated herself near a table, and knew now the nature of his malady and how to care for it, for upon that table she had found a diagnosis of the case with simple, intelligible rules for its treatment signed by one of the first physicians of France. The Marquis, to relieve his brother from any anxiety he might have as to his manner of treating himself, had shown him that document invested with the authority of a great name, and the document had remained there under the hand, under the eyes of Caroline, who studied it very carefully. She perceived that the Marquis had been, since she had known him, living under a regimen quite opposed to the one there prescribed: he took no exercise, he ate stintingly, and went with too little sleep. She did not know but that this relapse would be mortal; but if it were not, she resolved to be on her guard in the future and to be bold enough to watch over his health, even if he still had that gloomy, cold manner toward her which she now attributed to an anguish altogether physical.

The Duke returned before sunrise. He had not found the physician; he had to go and look for him at Évaux. Before starting thither, he wanted to see his brother. The dawn was streaking the horizon with its first lines of

white when he noiselessly regained the apartment of the Marquis. The latter was then sleeping so soundly that he did not hear the ascending footsteps, and Caroline could go out to meet the Duke upon the stairway, so that he should utter no exclamation of surprise at sight of her. His surprise was indeed great when he saw her coming down toward him with her finger to her lips. He understood nothing of what had passed. He thought that the Marquis had concealed the truth from him, that she was aware of his love, his sorrow, and that she had come to console him.

"Ah! my dear friend," taking her hands, "be at ease; he has confided all to me. You have come, you are good, you will save him"; and he carried Caroline's hands to his lips with genuine affection.

"But," said she, slightly astonished, "knowing him to be so ill, why did you leave him to-night? And since you counted upon my care for him, why did you not tell me it was needed?"

"What, then, has happened?" asked the Duke, who perceived that they did not understand each other. She told him briefly what had occurred, and as, absorbed by what he was hearing, he conducted her back across the grass-plot to the stairs of the Fox turret, Madame d'Arglade, who was already upon her feet behind the casement of her window, saw them pass, talking in a low voice with an air of mysterious intimacy. They stopped before the door, and stood talking awhile longer. The Duke gave Mlle. de Saint-Geneix an account of his attempt to bring a physician to see his brother, and Caroline dissuaded him from that design. She believed that the directions she had read would be sufficient, and that it would be highly imprudent to adopt a new treatment when they were aware that the first one had been attended with beneficial results. The Duke readily promised her to conform to this advice, and consequently to have confidence in it. Madame d'Arglade saw them take each other by the hand at parting, and the Duke, retracing his steps, ascend the stairs of the Griffin turret.

"Very well, I have seen enough," thought Léonie; "and I haven't to run about in the dew, which I don't like to do at all; I can lie abed the whole forenoon." And in getting herself to sleep again; "That Caroline!" she said to herself, "I see plainly that she lied. How probable it is that the Duke would allow her to go free! But I will keep it, this fine secret of hers, and if ever I have need of her, she will of course have to do as I wish."

Caroline retired quickly, that she might get quickly to sleep, so as to return to the service of her patient.

At eight o'clock she was up and looked through her window. The Duke was at that of his brother. He made her a sign that he would go through the halls and meet her in the library. She went thither immediately from her side of the house, and there she learned that the Marquis was remarkably well. He had just awakened, and he had said, "Heavens, what a miracle! This is my first sleep after a whole week of this suffering, and I no longer feel any pain; I breathe freely; it seems to me that I am cured. It is to her that I owe it all!" — "and it is the truth, my dear friend," added the Duke; "it is you who have saved him, and who will preserve him for us, if you have pity upon us."

The Duke had resolved to say nothing; he had sworn it to his brother; but, although thinking himself very discreet, he had let the truth escape him in his own despite. That truth darted through the mind of Caroline like a flash of lightning. "What is it that your Grace says?" cried she. "Who am I, and how am I here to have such an influence?"

The Duke himself was frightened by the frightened look of Caroline. "Come, in whom are you disappointed?" he said, resuming the mask of his tranquil smile. "What is that you have got into your head now? Do you not see that I worship my brother, that I am in great fear of losing him, and that, because of the assistance you were to him last night, I speak to you as if you were my sister? I am very much embarrassed; I lose my senses, do you see? Urbain is killing himself with work. My influ-

once over him is not sufficient ; he does not want me to inform our mother of the return of his old disorder. Informing her would be indeed to agitate her dangerously ; infirm as she is, she would be always with him to watch. At the end of two nights she would succumb to her exertions. It remains for us two, therefore, to save my brother, without seeming to do so, without taking the lackeys and chambermaids into our confidence. That sort of people will always talk. Come, are you a woman of heart and head as I have persuaded myself that you are ? Will you, can you, dare you, seriously, aid me to nurse him in secret, and watch alternately with me for several evenings, several nights if necessary, never leaving him alone an hour, so that even for an hour he cannot betake himself again to his accursed old books ? He needs nothing, I feel sure, but absolute repose of mind, sufficient sleep, a little walking, and that he should try to eat. To bring these things about, it requires the despotic authority — yes, the despotic authority of some one who is not afraid to go counter to his will — of some devoted heart not easily moved or harshly immovable, or unseasonably distrustful, — some one who will bear with his whims if he should have any, and with the impulsive excesses of his gratitude if such should escape him, — a serious friend, in a word, who shall have such delicate, intelligent charity for him as will make him accept and perhaps love his yoke. Well, now, Caroline, you are the only one here who can be that person. My brother has great esteem, profound respect, and, I believe, even a sincere friendship for you. Try to govern him a week, a fortnight, a month perhaps, for if he could get up to-day he would be here this evening turning over the leaves of his books and taking notes ; if he sleeps again to-night he will believe himself through with the whole thing, and will not go to bed at all the next night. You see what task we ought to impose upon ourselves. As for my part, I am resolved upon it, entirely devoted to it, but by myself alone I can do nothing. I shall weary him, he will allow no one but me to see him, and his impatience will neutralize the effect of

my care. With you, — a woman, a voluntary guardian, generous, firm and tender, patient and resolute, as women only know how to be, — I will answer for it that he will submit without ill-will, and later, when all the paroxysms of his disorder are passed, he will bless you for having thwarted him."

This insidious explanation of the case entirely dissipated the vague and sudden suspicion of Caroline. "Yes, yes," she answered, with decision, "I will be that guardian. Count upon me ; I thank you for having chosen me, and do not think better of me on that account. I am used to nursing ; it costs me neither effort nor fatigue. Your brother is to me, as to you, so worthy of respect and so superior to every one we know that it is a happiness and honor to serve him. Let us, therefore, understand each other, so that we can share this good task without arousing suspicion of any one around us here as to his real state. To begin with, you install yourself in his room to-night."

"He will not allow that."

"Well, then, his breathing can be heard from here. There is a large sofa on which one can sleep quite comfortably, muffled in a cloak. You and I can pass the night here alternately, till a change is brought about."

"Very well."

"You must make him rise early, so that he will get the habit of sleeping at night ; and you must bring him to breakfast with us."

"If you will make him promise to do these things."

"I will try. It is absolutely necessary that he should eat oftener than once in twenty-four hours. We will make him walk or simply seat himself with us in the open air till noon. That is the hour of his visit and yours to the Marchioness. I work with her till five o'clock ; then I dress —"

"That will not take you an hour. Will you not come and pay him a short visit in the library ? I shall be there."

"Yes, so I will ; we will all dine together. We will keep him in the drawing-room till ten o'clock. Then you will follow him."

"All this is perfect, but when my mother has visitors she will leave us at

liberty, and you can then easily come here and talk with us an hour or two?"

"No, not to talk," replied Caroline. "I will come and read to him a little, for you can well imagine he will not pass all this time without wishing to interest himself in something, and I will read to him in a way to quiet him and dispose him to sleep. So, it is agreed. Only to-day we shall be very much hindered by Madame d'Arglade."

"To-day I take everything upon myself, and Madame d'Arglade leaves to-morrow at daylight; then my brother is saved, and you are an angel!"

XIV.

BEING informed by his brother of all these arrangements, the Marquis submitted with gratitude. He was extremely weak, and recovering apparently from a dangerous crisis, which had not wholly exhausted him, but had broken him down morally almost as much as a long illness would have done. He could struggle against his love no longer; and having ceased to feel the dangerous storms of passion, thanks to this prostration, he gave himself up to the pleasure of being tenderly cared for. The Duke would not permit him to question the future. "You cannot come to any decision in your present state," Gaëtan would say to his brother. "You have n't the free use of your will: without health there can be no moral clear-sightedness. Let us cure you, and then you will see plainly that, with your health, you have also regained the strength necessary to resist your love, or to deal with the scruples it causes. In the mean time I don't see what you can have on your conscience, for Mlle. de Saint-Geneix suspects nothing, and after all is only doing what a sister would do in her place."

This compromise quieted all the invalid's uneasiness. He arose and went to see his mother a few moments, making her believe that a slight indisposition was responsible for the change in his countenance. He asked to be excused from returning till the next day, and so

for twenty-four hours, that is, until after the departure of Madame d'Arglade, he could give himself up to almost absolute repose.

Throughout the day there subsisted between the Duke and Caroline an air of mutual intelligence and an exchange of glances which had for their subject only the Marquis and his health, but which completely deluded Léonie. She went away perfectly sure of her facts, but without saying anything to the Marchioness which could lead that old lady to suppose her possessed of any penetration whatever.

At the close of the week M. de Villemer was much better. Every symptom of aneurism had passed away, and under rational treatment he even regained a certain glow of health, as well as a mental serenity, to which he had long been a stranger. No one for ten years had taken care of him with the assiduity, the devotedness, the evenness of temper, the unheard-of charm, with which Mlle. de Saint-Geneix contrived to surround him: we might even say he had never met with attentions at once so sensible and so tender, for his mother, aside from her lack of active physical strength, had shown herself excitable and over-anxious in the care she had lavished on him when his life had before been threatened. She had, indeed, at this time some suspicion of a relapse, when she saw her son more frequently with her, and consequently less devoted to his work; but when this idea occurred the crisis had already passed: the good understanding between the Duke and Caroline as to the need of tranquillity, the absolute ignorance of the servants, few in numbers and therefore very busy, and the serenity of the Marquis himself, all tended to reassure her; and at the close of a fortnight she even observed that her son was regaining an air of youth and health at which she could but rejoice.

The condition of the Marquis had been carefully concealed from Madame d'Arglade. The Duke would in no wise give up the great marriage projected for his brother. He thought Léonie was a foolish chatterbox, and did not care to have it understood in society that his brother's health, at any mo-

ment, might give serious cause for alarm. The Duke had thoroughly warned Caroline on this point. He was playing with her, in the interests of his brother as he understood them, the double game of preparing her as far as possible, and little by little, for the exercise of an unlimited devotion ; and to this end, he thought best to remind her, now and then, that the future well-being of the family rested entirely on the famous marriage. Caroline, then, had no chance to forget this ; and relying on the integrity of the two brothers, on her own ideas of duty and the unselfishness of her heart, she walked resolutely toward an abyss which might have engulfed her. And thus the Duke, naturally kind, and animated by the best intentions toward his brother, was coolly working out the misery of a poor girl whose personal merit made her worthy of the highest places of happiness and consideration.

Fortunately for Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, although the conscience of the Marquis was somewhat stupefied, it was not wholly asleep. Besides, his passion was made up of enthusiasm and sincere affection. He insisted that the Duke should be with them almost always, and in his abrupt sincerity he came near releasing Caroline from her attendance altogether, promising not to begin work again without her permission. The moment came even when he did give her this promise to induce her to cease her watch in the library ; he had found her there more than once, a guardian, gently and gayly "savage," over the books and portfolios, placed, she said, under interdict till further orders ; but the Duke counteracted the effect of this "imprudence" on his brother's part, by telling Caroline, in a very low voice, that she must not trust a promise, given in good faith to be sure, but which Urbain would not have it in his power to keep. "You don't know how absent-minded he is," said the Duke ; "when an idea takes hold of him it masters him, and makes him forget all his promises. I have found him myself, more than twenty times, searching over these bookshelves while my back was turned, and when I called out, 'Here, here, you marauder !' he seemed startled out of

a reverie and looked at me with an air of great surprise."

So Caroline did not relax her watchfulness. The library was much farther from her room than from that of the Marquis ; but yet so near the centre of the house that the constant presence of the young lady reader in this room devoted to study was not likely to strike the servants as anything remarkable. They saw her there often, sometimes alone, sometimes with the Duke or the Marquis, more frequently with both, although the Duke had a thousand pretexts for leaving her alone with his brother ; but even then the doors always open, the book often in Caroline's hands, the evident interest with which she was reading, and lastly, more than all this, the real truth of the situation, — truth, which has more power than the best-planned deception, — removed every pretext and even every desire for malicious comment.

In this state of things Caroline was really happy, and often recurred to it in after years as the most delightful phase of her life. She had suffered from Urbain's coldness, but now she found him showing an un hoped-for kindness and a disposition to trust her again. As soon as all fears for his health were dispelled, a bond was established between them, which, for Caroline, had not a single doubt or apprehension. The Marquis enjoyed her reading exceedingly, and before long he even consented to let her help him with his work. She conducted investigations for him and took notes, which she classified in the very spirit he desired, — a spirit she seemed to divine wonderfully. In short, she rendered his studies so pleasant, and relieved him so cleverly from the dry and disagreeable portions, that he could once more betake himself to writing without pain or fatigue.

The Marquis certainly needed a secretary far more than his mother did ; but he had never been able to endure this interposition between himself and the objects of his researches. He saw very soon, however, that Caroline never led him off into ideas foreign to his own, but kept him from straying away himself into useless speculations and

reveries. She had a remarkable clearness of judgment, joined with a faculty rarely possessed by women, namely, that of order in the sequence of thought. She could remain absorbed in any pursuit a long while, without fatigue or faltering. The Marquis made a discovery,—one that was destined to direct his future. He found himself in presence of a superior mind, not creative, indeed, but analytic in the highest degree,—just the organization he needed to give balance and scope to his own intellect.

Let us say, once for all, that M. de Villemer was a man of very sound understanding; but he had not found as yet, and was still awaiting, the crisis of its development. Hence the slow and painful progress of his work. He thought and wrote rapidly; but his conscientiousness, as a philosopher and moralist, was always putting fresh obstacles in the way of his enthusiasm as an historian. He was the victim of his own scruples, like certain devotees, sincere but morbid, who always imagine they have failed to tell their confessor the whole truth. He wanted to confess to the human race the truth about social science; and did not sufficiently admit that this science of truths and facts is, largely, a relative one, determined by the age in which one lives. He could not decide on his course. He strove to discover the meaning of facts long buried among the arcana of the past, and after he had, with great labor, caught a few traces of these, he was surprised to find them often contradictory, and in alarm would doubt his own discernment or his own impartiality, would suspend judgment, laying aside his work, and for weeks and months would be the prey of terrible uncertainties and misgivings.

Caroline, without knowing his book, which was still only half written, and which he concealed with a morbid timidity, soon divined the cause of his mental uneasiness from his conversation, and especially his remarks while she was reading aloud. She volunteered a few off-hand reflections of extreme simplicity, but so plainly just and right as to be unanswerable. She was not perplexed by a little blot on a

grand life or a tiny glimmer of reason in an age of delirium. She thought the past must be viewed just as we look at paintings, from the distance required by the eye of each in order to take in the whole; and that, as the great masters have done in composing their pictures, we must learn to sacrifice the petty details, which sometimes really destroy the harmony of nature, and even her logic. She called attention to the fact that we notice on a landscape, at every step, strange effects of light and shade, and the multitude will say, "How could a painter render that?" and the painter would reply, "By not rendering it at all."

She admitted that the historian is fettered more than the artist to accuracy in matters of fact, but she denied that there could be progress on any different principles in either case. The past and even the present of individual or collective life, according to her, take color and meaning only from their general tenor and results.

She ventured on these suggestions, cautiously putting them in the form of questions; without being positive, and as if willing to suppress them in case they were not approved; but M. de Villemer was struck with them, because he felt she had given expression to a certainty, an inward faith, and that if she consented to keep silence, she would still remain none the less convinced. He struggled a little, nevertheless, laying before her a number of facts which had delayed and troubled him. She passed judgment on them in one word, with the strong, good sense of a fresh mind and a pure heart, and he soon exclaimed with a glance at the Duke, "She finds the truth because she has it within her, and that is the first condition of clear insight. Never will the troubled conscience, never will the perverted mind, comprehend history."

"Perhaps," said she, "that is why history should not be too much made up from memoirs, for these are nearly always the work of prejudice or passions of the moment. It is the fashion now to dig these out with great care, bringing forward many trifling facts not generally known, and which do not deserve to be known."

"Yes, you are right," replied the Marquis; "if the historian, instead of standing firm in his belief and worship of lofty things, lets himself be misled and distracted by trivial ones, truth loses all that reality usurps."

If we relate these bits of conversation, perhaps a little out of the usual color of a romance, it is because they are necessary to explain the seriousness and apparent calmness of the relations that were growing up between the scholar and the humble lady-reader in the castle of Séval, in spite of the pains the Duke was taking to leave them as much as possible to the tender influences of youth and love. The Marquis felt that he belonged to Caroline, not only through his enthusiasm, his dreams, his need of throwing a kind of ideal about grace and beauty, but through his reason, his judgment, and through his present certainty that he had met that ideal. Henceforth Caroline was safe; she commanded respect by the weight of her character, and the Marquis stood in no further fear of losing control of his own impulses.

The Duke was at first astonished by this unlooked-for result of their intimacy. His brother was cured, he was happy, he seemed to have conquered love by the very power of love itself; but the Duke was intelligent and he understood. He was even seized himself with a serious deference for Caroline. He took an interest in her reading, and soon, instead of falling asleep under the first few pages, he wanted to read in his turn and give them his impressions. He had no convictions, but, in the artist spirit, allowed himself to be moved and borne along by those of others. He had read but little on serious subjects, in the course of his life, but he had admirably retained all kinds of dates and proper names. So that he had in his fine memory, as one might say, a sort of network with large meshes to which the loose lines of his brother's studies could be tied. That is, he was a stranger to nothing except the logical and profound meanings of historical events. He did not lack prejudices; but excellence of style had a power over him which put them to silence, and before an eloquent page,

whether of Bossuet or Rousseau, he felt the same enthusiasm.

Thus he also found himself pleasantly initiated into the pursuits of the Marquis and the society of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix. What was really very good in him is that, from the day he first became aware of his brother's affection for Caroline, she ceased to be a woman in his eyes. He had nevertheless felt some emotion for several days in her presence, and the truth had come upon him unexpectedly in an hour of feverish spite. From day to day he abjured every evil thought, and, touched by seeing that the Marquis, after a terrible attack of jealousy, had restored to him his entire confidence, he knew, for the first time in his life, what it was to feel a true and worthy friendship for a pretty woman.

In the month of July Caroline wrote to her sister thus:—

"Be easy about me, dear Camille, it is some time since I ceased to watch the invalid, for the invalid has never before been so well; but I have always kept up the practice of rising at day-break in the summer season, and every morning I have several hours I can devote to the work he is kindly permitting me to share with him. Just now he is himself sleeping a good sound sleep, for he retires at ten o'clock, and I am allowed here to do the same, and I often have precious intervals of freedom even in the daytime. Our proximity to the baths of Evaux and the road to Vichy brings us visitors at the very hours when in Paris the Marchioness used to shut herself up; she says this disturbs and wearies her, and yet, all the while, she is delighted! The great correspondence suffers under it, but even the correspondence itself has diminished, since the marriage of the Marquis was projected. This scheme so absorbs Madame de Villemer, that she cannot help confiding it or hinting something about it to all her old friends; after which she will reflect seriously, admitting the imprudence of saying much about it, and that she ought not to rely on the discretion of so many people; and then we throw into the fire the letters she has just dictated. This it is that leads her to say

so often: 'Bah! let us stop writing, I would rather say nothing at all than not to mention things that interest me.'

"When she has visitors she makes a sign that I may go and join the Marquis, for she knows now that I am taking notes for him. Since his illness is over, I thought there ought to be no mystery made about so simple a thing, and she is quite willing to have me relieve her son from any wearisome portions of his work. She is very curious to know what this book so carefully concealed can possibly be; but there is no danger of my betraying anything, for I don't know a single word in it. I only know that just now we are deep in the history of France, and more especially in the age of Richelieu; but what I need not mention to any one here is, that I anticipate a great divergence in opinion between the son and the mother on a host of grave matters.

"Do not blame me for having taken on myself a double task, and for having gained, as you put it, two masters in the place of one. With the Marchioness the task is sacred, and I have an affectionate pleasure in it; with her son the task is agreeable, and I put into it that kind of veneration of which I have often told you. I enjoy the idea of having contributed to his recovery, of having managed to take care of him without making him impatient, of having gently persuaded him to live a little more as people ought to live in order to be well. I have even taken advantage of his passion for study by telling him that his genius will feel the effects of disease, and that I have no faith in the intellectual clearness of fever. You have no idea how good he has been to me, how patiently he has taken rebuke, and how he has even let himself be scolded by this young-lady sister of yours; how he has thanked me for my interest in him, and submitted to all my prescriptions. It has gone so far that at table, even, he consults me with his eyes as to what he shall eat, and when we go out for a walk he has no more mind of his own than a child as to the little journey which the Duke and I insist on making him take. He has a charming disposition, and every day I discover some new trait in his character.

I did think he was a little whimsical and decidedly obstinate; but, poor fellow! it was the crisis that was threatening his life. He has, on the contrary, a gentleness and evenness of temper which is beyond everything; and the charm of familiar intercourse with him resembles nothing so much as the beauty of the waters flowing through our valley, always limpid, always plentiful, borne along in a strong and even current, never ruffled or capricious. And to follow out this comparison, I might say that his mind has also flowery banks and oases of verdure where one can pause and dream delightfully, for he is full of poetry; and I always wonder how he has ever subjected the warmth of his imagination to the rigid demands of history.

"What is more, he pretends that all this is a discovery of mine, and that he is just beginning to perceive it himself. The other day we were looking at the beautiful pastures full of sheep and goats in a ravine crossing that of the Char. At the farther end of this sharp cut, there is a casing of rugged rocks, and some of their notches rise so far above the plateau that, in comparison with the lower level, it is really a mountain; and these beautiful rocks of lilac-gray form a crest, sufficiently imposing to conceal the flat country that lies behind, so you cannot see from here the upper part of the plateau, and you might imagine yourself in some nook of Switzerland. At least, this is what M. de Villemer tells me, to console me for the way in which the Marchioness scouts my admiration. 'Don't worry about that,' said he, 'and don't think it necessary to have seen many sublime things in order to have the conception and the sensation of sublimity. There is grandeur everywhere for those who carry this faculty within themselves; it is not an illusion which they cherish either; it is a revelation of what really exists in nature in a manner more or less pronounced. For dull senses, there must be coarse signs of the power and dimensions of things. This is why many people who go to Scotland, looking for the pictures described by Walter Scott, cannot find them, and pretend that the poet has overpraised his coun-

y. His pictures are there, nevertheless, I am very sure, and if you should go there, you would find them at once.'

"I confessed to him that real intensity tempted me greatly; that I often saw, in dreams, inaccessible mountains and giddy abysses; that, before an engraving representing the furious waterfalls in Sweden or the bergs that stray from Arctic seas, I have been carried away with wild imaginations of independence, and that there is no tale of distant explorations with enough of suffering and danger in it to take away my regret at not having shared them.

"And yet," said he, 'before a charming little landscape like this you seemed happy and really satisfied a moment ago. Do you then really feel more in need of emotions and surprises than of tenderness and safety? See how beautiful it is, this stillness! How this hour of reflected lights, barred across with lengthening shadows, this water, in spray which seems caressing the sides of the rock, this motionless leafage looking as if it were silently drinking in the gold of the last sunbeams, how truly indeed is all this serene and thoughtful solemnity the expression of the beautiful and good in nature! I never used to know all this myself. It has not impressed me strongly until lately. I have always been living in the midst of dust and death, or among abstractions. I used, indeed, to dream over the pictures of history, the phantasmagoria of the past. I have sometimes seen the fleet of Cleopatra sailing to the verge of the horizon; in the silence of the night I have thought I heard the warlike trumpets of Roncesvalles; but it was the dominion of a dream, and the reality did not speak to me. But when I saw you gazing at the horizon without saying a word, with an air of content that was like nothing else in the world, I asked myself what could be the secret of your joy; and, if I must tell you all, your selfish patient was a little jealous of everything that charmed you. He set himself perturbedly to work at gazing too, when he settled the point at once; for he felt that he loved what you loved.'

"You understand perfectly, my dear little sister, that in talking to me thus

the Marquis told an audacious falsehood, for one can but see from all his remarks, and his manner of making them, that he has the true artist enthusiasm for nature, as well as for all else that is lovely; but he is so grateful to me, and so full of honest kindness, that he misrepresents things in perfect good faith, and imagines himself indebted to me for something new in his intellectual life."

XV.

ONE morning the Marquis, writing at the large table in the library, while Caroline at the other end was turning over some maps, laid down his pen and said to her with emotion, —

"Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, I remember that you have sometimes expressed a good-natured wish to know about this work of mine, and I thought I could never make up my mind to satisfy you; but now, — yes, now, I feel that submitting it to you will give me pleasure. This book is your work much more than it is mine, after all; because I did not believe in it, and you have led me to respect the impulse which prompted it. By restoring my faith in my task, you have enabled me to carry it further in one month than I had done for ten years before. You are also the cause why I shall certainly finish a thing which I should, perhaps, have been always recommencing until my last hour. Besides, it was near at hand, this last hour! I felt it coming quickly, and I hastened, the prey of despair, for I could see nothing advancing but the close of my life. You ordered me to live, and I have lived; to be calm, and I am at peace; to believe in God, and in myself, and I do so believe. Since I now have faith in my thought you must also give me faith in my power to express it, for although I do not hold to style more than is reasonable, yet I consider it necessary to give weight and attractiveness to truth. Here, my friend, read!"

"Yes," replied Caroline, eagerly; "you see that I do not hesitate, that I do not refuse; and this is neither prudent nor modest on my part. Very well, I am not disturbed by that! I

am so sure of your talent, that I stand in no fear of the fact that I shall have to be sincere, and I believe so thoroughly in the harmony of our opinions, that I even flatter myself I shall comprehend what, under other circumstances, would be beyond my reach."

But, as she was about to take the manuscript, Caroline hesitated before accepting so especial a mark of confidence, and inquired whether the excellent Duke was not also to be a sharer in this gratification.

"No," replied the Marquis, "my brother will not come to-day. I have seized upon a time when he is away hunting. I do not wish him to know about my work before it is finished; he would not comprehend it. His hereditary prejudices would stand in the way. To be sure he thinks he has a few 'advanced ideas' as he calls them, and he knows that I go farther than he; but he does not suspect how far I have strayed from the road in which my education placed me. My rebellion against these things of the past would put him in consternation, and this might disturb me before the close of my work. But you yourself,—perhaps you are going to be a little uneasy?"

"I have reached no decision myself," replied Caroline, "and very probably I shall adopt your opinions when I understand them exactly. Sit down now; I will read aloud for your benefit as well as my own. I want you to hear yourself speak. I think this must be a good way of rereading one's work."

Caroline read that morning a half-volume, resuming the employment the next day and the day after. In three days, she had made the Marquis listen to a summary of his studies for many years. She followed his handwriting as easily as print, although it was somewhat blind; and as she read aloud with admirable clearness, intelligence, and simplicity, growing animated and conscious of her own emotion when the narration rose to the lyric passages in the epic construction of the history, the author felt himself enlightened at once by a very sun of certainty formed of all the scattered rays by which his meditations had been penetrated.

The picture was fine, of beautiful

originality, bearing the stamp of real greatness. Under the simple and mysterious heading, "The History of Titles," he raised a whole series of bold questions, which aimed at nothing less than rendering universal, without restrictions and forever, the thought of the revolutionary night, August 4, 1789. This son of a noble house with ancient privileges, brought up in the pride of family and in the disdain of commoners, introduced before our modern civilization a written accusation of the nobility, along with documents to sustain his case, the proofs of their usurpations, their outrages, or their crimes, and pronounced sentence of forfeiture against them in the name of logic and justice, in the name of the human conscience, and, more than all, in the name of simple, scriptural Christianity. He boldly attacked the compromise of eighteen centuries, which would ally the equality revealed by the apostles to the arrangements of civil and theocratical hierarchies. Admitting in all classes none but political and executive hierarchies, that is to say, official positions, held as proofs of personal courage and social activity, or in a word, of any real services rendered, he pursued the privilege of birth as far as into the present state of public opinion and even as far as its final influences; tracing with a firm hand the history of the spoliations and usurpations of power from the creation of the feudal nobility down to the present time. It was reconstructing the history of France from a special point of view, under the sway of one idea,—a distinct, absolute, inflexible, indignant idea, springing from that religious feeling, which aristocracy cannot attack, without itself committing suicide, invoking, as it does, the divine right for the support of its own institution.

We will say no more about the data of this book, even a criticism of which would be foreign to our subject. Whatever judgment might be passed on the convictions of the author, it was impossible not to recognize in him a splendid talent, joined to the knowledge and strong good faith which mark a mind of the first rank. His style especially was magnificent, of a copiousness and rich-

ness which the modest brevity of the Marquis in social life would never have led one to suspect; though, even in his book, he gave small space to discussions. After having stated his premises and the motives of his investigation in a few pages of warm and severe criticism, he passed on with eloquent clearness to the facts themselves and classified them historically. His narrations, teeming as they did with color, had the interest of a drama or a romance, even when, rummaging among obscure family archives, he revealed the horrors of feudal times, with the sufferings and degradation of the lower classes. An enthusiast, but making no apologies for the fact, he deeply felt all offences against justice, against modesty, against love, and in many pages his soul, in its passion for truth, justice, and beauty, would reveal itself entirely in bursts of excited eloquence. More than once Caroline felt the tears come to her eyes, and laid aside the book to recover her composure.

Caroline made no objections. It is not for the simple narrator to say that she should have made them or that there were really none to make; it is necessary to relate merely that she found no objections to offer; so great was her admiration of his ability and her esteem for the man himself. The Marquis de Villemer became in her eyes a person so completely superior to all she had ever met, that she then and there formed the purpose of devoting herself to him unreservedly and for her whole life.

When we say "unreservedly" we are mindful that there was very certainly one exception which would not have been agreed to thus, had it presented itself to her mind; but it did not present itself. In such a man there was nothing to disturb the serenity of her enthusiasm. And yet we should not dare to affirm that, from this time onward, her enthusiasm did not unconsciously include love as one of the elements indispensable to its fulness; but love had not been its point of departure. The Marquis had never until now revealed all the attractiveness of his intellect or of his person; he had been constrained, agitated, and out of health.

Caroline did not, at first, perceive the change in him, that was taking place in such a gradual way, for he grew eloquent, young, and handsome, day by day, and hour by hour; recovering his health, his confidence in himself, the certainty of his own power, and the charm happiness gives to a noble face which has been veiled by doubt.

When she began to account for all these delightful transformations, she had already felt their effects without her own knowledge, and the autumn had come. They were about returning to Paris, and Madame de Villemer, under the sway of a fixed idea, would say every day to her young companion, "In three weeks, in a fortnight, in a week, the 'famous' interview of my son with Mlle. de Xaintrailles will take place."

Caroline then felt a fearful anguish in the depths of her heart, a consternation, a terror, and an overmastering revelation of a kind of attachment which she did not yet confess even to herself. She had so fully accepted the vague and still distant prospect of this marriage that she had never been willing to ask herself whether it would give her pain. It was for her a thing inevitable, like old age or death; but one does not really accept, old age or death until either arrives, and Caroline felt that she was growing weak and that she should die at the thought of this absolute separation, so near at hand.

She had ended by believing with the Marchioness that the scheme could not fail. She had never dared to question the Marquis; besides the Duke had forbidden this, in the name of the friendship she felt for the family. According to him, the Marquis would never come to a decision as long as he was tormented about it, and the Duke well knew that the least anxiety on Caroline's part would overthrow all his brother's designs.

The Duke, after having sincerely admired the purity of their relations, began to grow anxious about it. "This is becoming," said he to himself, "an attachment so serious that one cannot foresee its results. Shall we believe that his tender respect for her has killed his love? No, no, such respect in a

case like this is love with redoubled power."

The Duke was not mistaken. The Marquis was not at all concerned at the prospect of a marriage which he had now determined not to contract. He was only troubled about the change which a residence in Paris would for a time effect in his relations with Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, in their free intimacy, in their common studies, in that continuous security which could not be found elsewhere. He mentioned this to her with great sadness. She felt the same regret, and attributed her own inward sorrow to her love for the country and to the breaking up of a life so sweet and noble.

She, however, experienced a charming surprise on her arrival in Paris. She found her sister there awaiting her with the children, and learned that Camille was going to be near her. She was to live at Etampes in a little house, half city and half country residence, pretty, new, in a good atmosphere, with the enjoyment besides of a considerable garden. She would be only an hour's ride by rail from Paris. She had placed Lili at school, having obtained a scholarship for her in a Parisian convent. Caroline would be able to see her every week. Finally a scholarship had also been promised her for little Charles, in a college when he should be old enough to enter.

"You fill me with surprise and delight!" cried Caroline, embracing her sister; "but who has worked all these miracles?"

"You," replied Camille, "you alone; it is always you."

"No, indeed. I had hopes of obtaining these scholarships, that is, of procuring them some day or other, through Léonie, who is so obliging; but I did not hope for such prompt success."

"O no!" replied Madame Heudebert, "this did not come from Léonie; it came from some one here."

"Impossible! I have never said a word about it to the Marchioness. Knowing how much she is at variance with 'the powers that be,' I should not have dared —"

"Some one has dared to approach the

ministry, and this some one — he does not wish to be named; he has acted in secrecy, and yet I shall betray him because it is impossible for me to keep a secret from you — this some one is the Marquis de Villemer."

"Ah! Then you wrote to ask him —"

"Not at all. It was he who wrote to me, inquiring about my situation and my claims with a kindness, a propriety, a delicacy, — yes, Caroline, you were quite right in esteeming a character like his. But stop, I have brought his letters. I wish you would read them." Caroline read the letters, and saw that, beginning from the day when she had taken care of M. de Villemer, he had been bestowing attentions upon her family, with a lively and constant interest. He had anticipated her secret wishes, he had concerned himself about the education of the children. He had taken prompt and sure measures by letter, without even offering to take them; confining himself to asking Camille for the necessary information as to the services of her husband in his department. He had announced his success, refusing to be thanked, and saying that his debt of gratitude to Mlle. de Saint-Geneix was far from being paid. This good news had reached Camille during the slow journey with post-horses which Caroline was taking with the Marchioness, for the old lady had a fear and horror of coaches and railways.

As to the house at Étampes, this was also the idea and proposition of the Marquis. There was, he said, a little estate, bringing in nothing, which had been left him by an aged relative, and he begged Madame Heudebert to do him the favor of living there. She had accepted this offer, saying that she would take upon herself all the expense of repairs; but she had found the little house in excellent condition, furnished, and even provided with fuel, wine, and vegetables for more than a year. When she inquired about the rent of the person charged by the Marquis with these details, he replied that his orders were to receive no money, that it was too slight a matter, and that the Marquis had never proposed to rent the house of his aged cousin to strangers.

Though Caroline was deeply moved by these favors from her friend, and pleased to see the lot of her family so much improved, she felt, nevertheless, a sorrow at heart. It seemed as if this was a kind of farewell from him whose life was to be parted forever from her own, and, as it were, an account settled by his gratitude. She drove back this sorrow, however, and passed her mornings for several days in walking out with her sister and the children, in buying the outfit of the little school-girl, and finally in establishing her at the convent. The Marchioness wished to see Madame Heudebert, and the pretty Elizabeth who was going to lose at the convent her soft pet name of Lili. She was pleasant to Caroline's sister, and did not let the child depart without a pretty present: she wished to give Caroline two days of freedom with her family, so that she might have ample time to bid them good by and conduct them to the station again. She even rode herself to the convent to recommend Elizabeth Heudebert as under her special protection.

Camille had also seen the Marquis and the Duke at their mother's; she had only ventured to present Lili to her benefactor, the other children not being old enough; but M. de Villemer wanted to see them all; he went to call upon Madame Heudebert at the hotel where she had taken lodgings, and found Caroline in the midst of the children, by whom she was almost worshipped. She found him, for his part, not in a revery, but apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the cares and caresses that she gave them. He looked at each child with tender attention, and spoke to them all, like a man in whom the paternal sentiment is already well developed. Caroline, ignorant that he really was a father, imagined, with a sigh, that he was thinking of future family joys.

The following day, after she had seen her sister safely in the railway carriage which was to carry her back to Étampes, Caroline felt herself horribly alone, and, for the first time, the marriage of the Marquis presented itself to her mind as an irreparable disaster in her own life. She left the platform quickly to hide

her tears; but in the court she came directly upon M. de Villemer. "What!" said he, offering her his arm. "You are weeping. That is just what I was expecting; and I was anxious to come to this place, where pretexts for the public are not wanting, to sustain you a little in this sorrow which is so natural, and to remind you that you still have sincere friends here."

"What! did you come here on my account?" replied Caroline, wiping away her tears. "I am ashamed of this momentary weakness. It is ingratitude to you who have loaded my relatives with favors, who have established them near me, and whom I ought to bless with joy instead of feeling the slight pain of a separation which cannot last very long. My sister will often return to see her daughter, and I shall see her myself oftener still. No, no, I have no cause for grief; on the contrary, I am very happy, — thanks to you for it!"

"Then why do you still weep?" said the Marquis, as he led her back to the carriage he had brought for her: "come, you are a little nervous, are you not? but it troubles me. Let us go back to the platform as if we were in search of some one. I shall not leave you in tears. It is the first time I have seen you weeping, and it hurts me. Stop, we are only a few steps from the Jardin des Plantes; at eight in the morning there is no risk of meeting any one we know. Besides, with that mantle and veil, no one will recognize you. It is pleasant enough; will you come and look at the 'Swiss Valley'? We will try to imagine ourselves in the country again, and when I leave you, I shall be sure — at least, I hope, that you will not be ill."

There was so much friendly solicitude in the tone of the Marquis, that Caroline did not think of refusing his offer. "Who knows," thought she, "that he does not wish to bid me a brotherly adieu before entering upon his new existence? It is, indeed, a thing which is allowable for us to do, — which perhaps we ought to do. He has never yet spoken to me of his marriage; it would be strange if he did not speak to me about it, and if I were not prepared and willing to hear him."

XVI.

THE Marquis made a sign for the coachman to follow them, and conducted Caroline on foot, chatting pleasantly with her about her sister and the children; but, neither during this short walk, nor on the shaded avenues of the "Swiss Valley" in the Jardin des Plantes, did he say one word about himself. It was only when he stopped with her under the pendent boughs of Jussieu's cedar, just as they were on the point of returning, that he said, smiling, and in the most indifferent tone, "Do you know that my official presentation to Mlle. de Xaintrailles takes place to-day?"

It seemed to the Marquis that he felt Caroline's arm trembling as it rested on his own; but she replied, with sincerity and resolution, "No, I did not know that it was to-day."

"If I speak to you at all about this," he resumed, "it is only because I know my mother and my brother have kept you informed of this fine project. I have never talked with you about it myself; it was not worth while."

"Then you thought that I would not be interested in your happiness?"

"My happiness! How can it be in the hands of a lady I do not know? And you, my friend, how can you speak so, — you who know me?"

"Then I will say the happiness of your mother, — since that depends upon this marriage."

"O, that is another matter," replied M. de Villemer, quickly. "Shall we rest a moment on this seat, and while we are alone here will you let me talk a little about my position?"

They seated themselves. "You will not be cold?" continued the Marquis, wrapping the folds of Caroline's mantle around her."

"No, and you?"

"O, as for me, my health is robust now, thanks to you, and that is why they think seriously of making me the head of a family of my own. It is a happiness which I do not need so much as they suppose. There are already children in the world that one loves, — just as you love those of your sister! But let us pass that over and suppose

that I really dream of descendants in a long line. You understand that I do not hold to this as a point of family pride; you know my ideas about nobility; they are not precisely those of the people around me. Unfortunately for the people around me, I cannot change in this regard; it no longer depends upon myself."

"I know that," replied Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, "but your heart is too comprehensive not to long after the warmest and holiest affections of life."

"Suppose all that you please in that respect," replied the Marquis, "and then understand that the choice of the mother of my children is the most important affair of my life. Well, then, this great transaction, this sacred choice, do you think any one else could attend to it in my place? Do you admit that even my excellent mother can wake up some morning and say, 'There is in society a young lady, whose name is illustrious and whose fortune is large, and who is to be the wife of my son, because my friends and I consider the match advantageous and proper? My son does not know her, but no matter! Perhaps she will not please him at all; perhaps he will displease her as much; no matter again! It would please my eldest son, my friend the duchess, and all those who frequent my little drawing-room. My son must be unnatural if he does not sacrifice his repugnance to this fancy. And if Mlle. de Xaintrailles should think of such a thing as not calling him perfect, she will be no longer worthy of the name she bears!' You see plainly, my friend, that all this is absurd, and I am astonished that you have taken it seriously for one moment."

Caroline struggled in vain against the inexpressible joy which this assurance caused her; but she quickly remembered all the Duke had said, and all that duty required her to say herself.

"You astonish me too," rejoined she. "Did you not promise your mother and your brother to see Mlle. de Xaintrailles at the appointed time?"

"And so I shall see her this evening; it is an interview arranged in such a way as to appear accidental, and one

which does not bind me in any respect."

"That is an evasion which I cannot admit in a conscience like that of the Marquis de Villemer. You have passed your word that you will do your best toward recognizing the merit of this person, and making her appreciate yours."

"O, I ask nothing better than to do my best in that direction," replied the Marquis, with so merry and winning a laugh that Caroline was dazzled by the look he fixed upon her.

"Then you are making light of your mother's wishes?" resumed she, arming herself with all her reserve of resistance; "I never would have believed you capable of that."

"No, no, I am not, indeed," replied M. de Villemer, recovering his seriousness. "When they exacted this promise from me I did not laugh, I assure you. I was in deep sorrow and seriously ill; I felt myself dying, and I thought my heart was already dead. I yielded to tender and cruel persuasions, in the hope that they would let me die in peace; but I have been recalled, my friend; I have taken a new lease of life; I feel myself full of youth again, and of the future. Love is astir within me, like the sap in this great tree; yes, love, — that is, faith, strength, a sense of my immortal being, which I must account for to God, and not to human prejudice. I will be happy in my own way; I will live, and I will not marry unless I can love with my whole soul!"

"Do not tell me," continued he, without giving Caroline time to reply, "that I have other duties in opposition to this. I am not a weak, irresolute man. I am not satisfied with words consecrated by usage, and I do not propose to become the slave and the victim of ambitious chimeras. My mother desires to recover our wealth! She is at fault in that. Her true happiness and her true glory are in having renounced it all to save her eldest son. She is richer now — since I have arranged for her support at the price of nearly all I have left — than she was ten years ago, submitting with terror to a doubtful situation, and one which she believed must grow worse. See, then, if I have

not done for her all that I could do! I have certain strong opinions, the fruit of the study and thought of my whole life. I have held them in silence. I have suffered terribly from griefs which she has never suspected. I have been in real torture from my own heart, and I have spared her the pain of seeing my agony. I have even suffered at her hands and have never complained. Have I not seen, from childhood, that she had an irresistible preference for my brother, and did I not know, besides, that she thought this due to the oldest and most highly titled of her sons? I have conquered the vexation of this wound, and when my brother at last permitted me to love him, I did love him devotedly; but before that time how many secret affronts and bitter jests I have brooked from him, and from my mother too, in league with him against the seriousness of my thought and life! I bore them no ill-will for this; I understood their mistakes and prejudices; but without knowing it, they did me much harm.

"In the midst of so many vexations, only one thing could tempt a solitary man like me, — the glory of letters. I felt within me a certain fire, an impulse towards the beautiful, which might draw around me manifold sympathies. I saw that this glory would wound my mother in her beliefs, and I determined to keep the most strict incognito, that the paternity of my work might not even be suspected. You alone, you only in the whole world, have been intrusted with a secret which is never to be disclosed. I will not add, during my mother's lifetime, for I have a horror of these mental reservations, these parricidal schemes, which seem like calling death down upon those whom we ought to love better than ourselves. I have said 'never' in this matter, so as never to entertain the idea of any state of things in which a personal gratification could lessen my grief at losing my mother."

"Very well! in all this, I like you as much as I admire you," replied Mlle. de Saint-Genex; "but it strikes me, that with respect to your marriage, it can all be arranged as it ought, with due regard to your own wishes and to those of

your family. Since they say that Mlle. de Xaintrilles is entirely worthy of you, why, at the moment of assuring yourself of this, do you say beforehand that it is neither possible nor probable? This is where I do not comprehend you at all, and where I doubt if you have any serious or respectable reasons that I could be brought to accept."

Caroline spoke with a decision which at once changed the resolution of the Marquis. He was on the point of opening his heart to her at all hazards; he had felt himself guided onward by a glimmer of hope, of which she had now deprived him, and he became sad, and seemingly quite overcome.

"Well, you see," resumed she, "you can find no answer to this."

"You are not wrong," said he; "I had no right to tell you that I should certainly be indifferent to Mlle. de Xaintrilles. I know it myself; but you cannot be a judge of the secret reasons that give me this certainty. Let us say no more about her. I expect you to be thoroughly convinced of my independence and clear conscience in this matter. I would not have a thought like this remaining in your mind, M. de Villemer is to marry for money, for position, and for a name. O my friend, never believe that of me, I beg of you. To fall so low in your esteem would be a punishment which I have not merited through any fault, by any wrong against you or against my family. I expect, likewise, that you will not reproach me, if I should happen to find myself obliged openly to oppose my mother's wishes with regard to my marriage. I have felt it my duty to tell you all that justifies me in a pretended eccentricity. Be so good as to absolve me beforehand if, sooner or later, I have to show her and my brother that I will give them my blood, my life, my last franc and even my honor, if need be, but not my moral freedom, not my truth to myself. No, never! These are my own, these are the only possessions I reserve, for they come from God, and man has no claim upon them."

As he spoke thus, the Marquis laid his hand upon his heart with a forcible pressure. His face, at once energetic and charming, expressed his enthusias-

tic faith. Caroline, bewildered, was afraid of having understood aright and yet equally afraid lest she might have deceived herself; but what mattered that which, thus against her will, passed in her mind? She must pretend not to suppose that the Marquis could ever think of her. She had great courage and invincible pride. She answered that it was not for her to decide upon the future: but that, for her own part, she had loved her father so much that she would have sacrificed her own heart even, if, by a complete renunciation of herself, she could have prolonged his life. "Take care," said she with spirit, "whatever you may decide upon to-day or afterward, always remember this; that when beloved parents are no more, all that we might have done to render their lives longer or happier will come before us with terrible eloquence. The slightest short-coming then assumes enormous proportions; and there will never be a moment of peace or happiness for one who, even while using all his rightful freedom, gains the memory of having seriously grieved a mother who is no more."

The Marquis pressed Caroline's hand silently and convulsively; she had hurt him deeply, for she had spoken the truth.

She rose, and he conducted her to the carriage again. "Be content," said he, breaking the silence as he was about leaving her. "I will never openly wound my mother. Pray for me, that I may have eloquence to convince her when the time comes. If I do not succeed — Well, what is that to you? It will be so much the worse for me."

He flung the address to the coachman and disappeared.

XVII.

It was no longer possible for Caroline to feel a doubt of the sentiment she had inspired. To avoid responding to it, she had but one line of defence, which was to act either as if she had never suspected it, or as if she did not suppose the Marquis would dare to speak of it a second time to her, even indi-

rectly. She resolved to discourage him so completely that he would never recur to the subject, and not to remain alone with him long enough for him to lose his natural timidity under the impulse of increasing emotion.

When she had thus marked out her course of conduct, she hoped to be at peace; but, after all, she had to give way to natural feelings, and sob as if her heart would break. She wisely yielded to this grief, saying to herself, that, since it must be so, it was better for her to suffer from a momentary weakness than to struggle against herself too much. She well knew that in a direct contest our instinctive self-love awakes, in spite of us, and leads us to seek some side issue, some compromise with the austerity of duty or destiny. She refused, then, to dream or reflect; it was better for her to hide her head and weep.

She did not see M. de Villemer again until evening, just as the ordinary visitors of the family were taking leave; he came in with the Duke, both of them in evening dress. They had just returned from the residence of the Duchesses de Dunières.

Caroline would have retired immediately. The Marchioness detained her, saying, "O, so much the worse, my dear, you will have to sit up a little later this evening. It's worth while though; we are going to hear what has happened."

Before long the explanation was forthcoming. The Duke had an undefined look as of astonishment; but the countenance of the Marquis was open and calm. "Mother," said he, "I have seen Mlle. de Xaintrailles. She is beautiful, amiable, full of attractions; I can't imagine any sentiments which she might not inspire in the man who has the good fortune to please her; but I have had no such good fortune. She would n't look at me twice, — so entirely did the first glance suffice for her to pass judgment on me."

And as the Marchioness was silent in utter consternation, the Marquis took her hands, adding, as he kissed them, "But this need n't affect you the least in the world. On the contrary, I have come back full of dreams and plans and

hopes. There is in the air — O, I felt it at once — quite another marriage than this, and one which will give you infinitely more pleasure!"

Caroline felt herself dying and reviving by turns at every word she heard; but she also knew the eyes of the Duke were fastened upon her, and she said to herself that perhaps the Marquis was stealthily watching her, between each of his phrases. So she kept her countenance. It was plain that she had wept; but her sister's departure might be the only cause. She had acknowledged it, and the Marquis had himself witnessed her tears on that occasion.

"Come, my son," said the Marchioness, "don't keep me in suspense, and if you are talking seriously —"

"No, no," said the Duke, mincing gracefully, "it is n't serious."

"But, indeed, it is," cried Urbain, who was unusually gay; "it's on the programme for the most plausible and delightful thing in the world!"

"It's singular enough, at least — and spicy enough," rejoined the Duke.

"Come now, do stop your riddles," cried the Marchioness.

"Well, let us have it," said the Duke to his brother with a smile.

"I propose to do that; I ask nothing better," replied the Marquis; "it's quite a story, and I must proceed with it in order. Imagine, my dear mamma, our arrival at the Duchess's, both as fine as you see us now, — no, finer still, for there was on our faces that air of conquest which suits my brother so well, and which I attempted for the first time, but with no success at all, as you shall see."

"That means," rejoined the Duke, "that you had an air of prodigious abstraction, and began operations by looking at a portrait of Anne of Austria, lately placed in the drawing-room of the Duchess, instead of looking at Mlle. de Xaintrailles."

"Ah!" said the Marchioness, sighing, "it was very lovely then, this portrait?"

"Very lovely," replied Urbain. "You will say it was no time for me to be noticing this; but you are going to see how fortunate it was, after all, that it happened. Mlle. Diana was seated by the corner of the mantel, with Mlle. de

Dunières and two or three other young ladies of haughty ancestry more or less English. While my distracted eyes are hanging upon the plump countenance of our late queen, Gaëtan, thinking me close at his heels, goes directly, in his capacity of elder brother, to salute first the Duchess, then her daughter and the whole juvenile group, singling out at once, with an eagle eye, the beautiful Diana, whom he had n't seen since she was five years old. Having promenaded his bewitching smile into this privileged corner, and traversed the other groups with that meek and triumphant elegance which belongs to him alone, he returns to me, just as I am beginning my evolution toward the Duchess, and says in an angry tone though in a low voice, 'Come on! what are you about there?' I dart forward, I salute the Duchess in my turn, I try to look at my betrothed; she had her back turned to me squarely. An evil omen! I retreat to the mantelpiece, in order to display all my advantages. The Duchess addresses some conversation to me, charitably bent on giving me a chance to shine. And I—why, I was ready to talk like a book; but it was all for nothing; Mlle. de Xaintrailles never looked at me and listened still less; she was whispering to her young companions. At last she turns round and darts at me a glance full of wonder and most decidedly cool. I am introduced to her neighbor, Mlle. de Dunières, a young girl slightly deformed, but brilliant intellectually it seemed to me, and who was very evidently nudging her friend with her elbow; but all in vain, and I return to my rostrum, that is, to the mantelpiece, without having called up the faintest blush. I do not lose my self-possession, but, resuming conversation with the Duke, I go on making some very judicious remarks about the session of the Chambers, when, all at once, I hear the music of charming bursts of laughter, poorly suppressed, from the young ladies in the corner. Probably they found me stupid. I am not confounded, however; I continue; and after having properly shown the fluency of my elocution, I inquire about the historical portrait, to the great satisfaction of the Duke de Dunières, who thinks of noth-

ing but having his picture appreciated. While he is leading me toward it to examine it and admire the beauty of its execution, my brother quietly takes my place and on my return I find him installed between the arm-chair of the Duchess and that of her daughter, close by Mlle. Diana, in the midst of the group, joining in the chat of the young ladies."

"Is this true, my son?" asked the Marchioness of the Duke, with anxiety.

"It is quite true," replied the Duke, ingenuously. "I laid siege to the fortress; I took a position. I expected Urbain to manoeuvre so as to come to my support; but no, the traitor leaves me alone exposed to the fire, and you see I have to get off as I can. What took place meanwhile? He is going to tell you."

"Alas! I know more than enough," said the Marchioness, in despair; "he was thinking of something else."

"Pardon me, mamma," replied the Marquis, "I had no wish to do so and no time either, for the Duchess, leaving Gaëtan engaged with the young ladies, took me aside, and, laughing in spite of herself, said these memorable words, which I report *verbatim*: 'My dear Marquis, what has taken place here this evening is like a scene in a comedy. Just imagine to yourself that the young person — whom it is useless to name — takes you for your brother, and consequently persists in taking your brother for you. We tell her she is mistaken, but all in vain; she will have it that we are deceiving her, that she is not to be taken in so — and — must I tell you the whole?'

"Yes, certainly, Madame de Dunières; you are too much my mother's friend to let me sail on a false course!"

"Yes, yes, that's it! I ought not to leave you on the wrong track, I should be really distressed at that, and you must know at once how matters stand. They find the Duke charming, and you —"

"And me absurd? Come! be frank clear to the end."

"You! You are not thought of at all, you are not seen, you are nothing, no one is heard but the Duke! If I

did n't know you were very fond of your brother, I should never tell you this —'

"I reassured the Duchess so earnestly, I expressed so much joy over the idea that my brother was preferred to me, that she replied, 'Well done! why, here we are in a romance! When it is known the Duke is the one who pleases, don't you expect a great outcry?'

"'Why, who will make it? You, Madame de Dunières?'

"'Perhaps so, but it's certain *she* will! Well, now, all this must be explained. Come with me and see what is going on; we cannot part on the strength of a *quid pro quo*.'

"'No, no,' I said to the Duchess, 'you must listen to me first. Here I have a cause to plead which is a hundred times dearer than my own. You have said something that alarms me, at which I feel a real concern, and I beg you will take it back. You seem disposed to decide against my brother in case your amiable god-daughter should pardon him for not being the Marquis. As I am sure, now, that she will pardon him without difficulty, if she has not done so already, I want to understand your objections to him, in order to do battle against them. My brother has, on his father's side, a descent far more illustrious than my own; he has all the traits of a true gentleman, and all the attractions of an agreeable man; as for me, I am not a man of the world, and, if I must avow all, I have some tendency toward being a liberal.'

"The Duchess made a gesture of horror; then she began to laugh, thinking I was in jest."

"Knowing you were in jest, my son!" interposed the Marchioness, in a tone of reproach.

"Good or poor," rejoined the Marquis, "the joke had no ill effect. The Duchess let me set off my brother's merits, agreed with me that a man of rank, who has never forfeited his honor, has a right to ruin himself financially, that a life of pleasure has always been well received in high circles, when there is wisdom enough to leave it behind in season, to accept poverty nobly, and to show one's self superior to one's follies. Finally, I appealed to the friendship of

the Duchess for you, to the desire she had felt for an alliance with you on the part of her god-daughter, and I had the good fortune to be so persuasive that she promised not to influence the choice of Mlle. de Xaintrilles."

"Ah! my son, what have you done?" cried the Marchioness, trembling. "I recognize your good heart in it all, but it is a dream! A girl brought up in a convent will certainly be afraid of a conquering hero like this vain fellow. She would never dare to trust him."

"Stop, mother," resumed the Marquis, "I have n't finished my story. When we returned to the young ladies, Mlle. Diana was calling my brother 'Your Grace,' as boldly as you please. She was talking and laughing with him, and I was allowed to aid him in shining before her. However, he had no great need of me. She drew him out brilliantly herself, and I found she was n't sorry to show us in her replies that she was quite witty, and that mirth suited her excellently."

"The fact is," said the Duke, carried away by an irresistible infatuation, "she is bewitching, this little Diana, whom I have seen playing with her dolls! I reminded her of it, for I did n't wish to impose upon her as to my age —"

"And to this," continued the Marquis, "I added that you were fibbing to her, that it was I who had seen the doll, and that you were a child in the cradle then; but Mlle. Diana would n't let me suppose that she saw in me the material for a Duke. 'No, no, monsieur, the Marquis,' said she, laughing, 'your brother here is thirty-six years old, I know all about it.' And this was said with a tone, with an air —"

"That drove me distracted, I admit it," said the Duke, rising and tossing his mother's spectacles up to the ceiling, catching them again adroitly; "but, see, all this is folly! Mlle. Diana is an artless and adorable little coquette — a thorough school-girl, a little wild over her approaching entrance into society, preparing herself in the retirement of her family circle to keep all heads turned, until at last her own is turned also; but it's too soon

now ! To-morrow morning, after she has thought it over — And then they will tell her such naughty things about me !”

“To-morrow night you will see her again,” said the Marquis, “so you can counteract the evil influences, if any such are near her, and I don’t believe there will be. Don’t make yourself more interesting than you really are, brother mine ! Besides, the Duchess is on your side, and she did n’t let you go without saying, ‘*Come again soon. We are at home every evening : we don’t go into society till after Advent,*’ — which means, in good plain French : ‘There is still a whole month before my daughter and god-daughter will see the gay world. It is for you to please before they are intoxicated with dress and balls. We receive but few young people now, and it only remains for you to be the youngest, that is, the most eager and the most fortunate.’”

“Bless me, bless me !” said the Marchioness, “I feel myself in a dream. My poor Duke ! And I never so much as thought of you. Why, I — I imagined you had won so many women that you would never find one simple enough, generous enough ; wise enough, after all ; for here you are, reformed, and I dare say you will make the Duchess d’Aléria perfectly happy.”

“I can answer for that, mother,” cried the Duke. “What has made me bad is suspicion, experience of coquettes and ambitious women ; but a charming young girl, a child of sixteen, who is willing to trust me, ruined as I am — but I should become a child again myself ! And you would be very happy too, would n’t you ? And you, Urbain, who were so afraid you would have to marry ?”

“Has he taken a vow of celibacy, then ?” asked the Marchioness, looking at the Marquis with tenderness.

“Not at all,” replied Urbain, with some spirit, “but you see there has been no time lost, as my elder brother still makes such fine conquests ! If you will give me a few months more for reflection —”

“Yes, yes, indeed ! there is no real haste,” rejoined the Marchioness ; “and since we have such good fortune, I trust

in the future — and in you, my excellent friend !”

She embraced her two sons, evidently intoxicated with joy and hope. She addressed her children in the most familiar and affectionate way, and also embraced Caroline, exclaiming, “You good pretty little blonde ! you must rejoice too !”

Caroline had more disposition to rejoice than she cared to admit, even to herself. Overcome with fatigue after the excitement of the day, she slept delightfully ; with the assurance that the crisis had been postponed, and that some time, at least, must elapse before she would see the final and irrevocable obstacle of marriage come between herself and M. de Villemer.

XVIII.

THE Marchioness slept little. Her impatience for the morrow almost stifled her. Want of sleep took away her spirits. She viewed everything on its dark side, and expected to find the whole a delusion ; but when Caroline brought in her correspondence, there was a letter from the Duchess that transported her with joy. “My friend,” said Madame de Dunières, “here is a change of scene like those at the opera. It is the case of your eldest son that demands attention. I talked with Diana when she awoke this morning. I did not asperse the Duke, but my religion obliged me not to hide from her any of the truth. She replied that I had said all this before, in speaking of the Marquis, that I had nothing to tell her which she had not already considered, and that on mature reflection, she had become equally interested in the two brothers, whose friendship was such a beautiful thing, and that, in thinking over the position of the Duke, she had found it more meritorious to have borne the burden of gratitude nobly than to have rendered a service exacted by duty.” She added that, “Since I had counselled her to bestow happiness and wealth on some worthy man, she felt herself drawn toward him who pleased her best. In fine, the irresistible graces of your good-

for-nothing son have done the rest. And then I must not be mistaken about Diana. She judges that the title of Duchess will suit her queenly figure best: she is inclined to be fond of society; and when, not long ago, some one, I know not who, told her that the Marquis did not like it at all, I saw she was uneasy, though I did not know the reason. Now she has confessed all. She has said to me that as a brother the Marquis would be all she could desire, but that as a husband the Duke would show her the gayest life. In short, my dear, she seems so determined that I have only to serve you all I can in this unforeseen contingency as I should have done in the other case.

"I will bring my daughter to you to-morrow morning, and as Diana will be with us, you can see her without appearing to suspect anything; but you will succeed in charming her completely, I am very sure."

While the Marchioness and the Duke were giving themselves up to their happiness, Caroline was left a little more alone; for the son and the mother held long conversations every day in which her presence was naturally undesired, and during which she practised music or wrote her own letters in the drawing-room, always deserted until five o'clock. There she disturbed no one, and held herself in readiness to answer the least summons of the Marchioness.

One day the Marquis came in with a book, and seating himself at the same table where she was writing, with an air strangely calm and resolved, asked her permission to work in this room, where it was easier to breathe than in his little chamber. "That is, on condition," said he, "that I don't drive you away, for I see quite clearly that you have avoided me for some days past; don't deny it!" added he, seeing she was about to reply. "You have reasons for this which I respect, but which are not well grounded. In speaking of myself as I ventured to do at the Jardin des Plantes I startled the delicacy of your conscience. You thought I was going to make you my confidante in some personal project likely to disturb the peace of my family, and you were

unwilling to become even a passive accomplice in my rebellion."

"Exactly so," replied Caroline, "you have divined my feeling perfectly."

"Now let my words become as if they had never been said," continued Urbain, calmly and with a firmness that commanded respect; "I will not tell you to forget them, but do not dwell on them in any way, I beg, and never fear my bringing your attachment for my mother into collision with the generous friendship you have deigned to accord me."

Caroline felt constrained to yield to the power of this frankness. She did not comprehend all that was passing through the mind of the Marquis, all that was suppressed behind his words. She thought she must have been mistaken, that she had felt too much alarm at a fancy he had already conquered. In her own mind she accepted her friend's promise as a formal reparation for having caused her a moment of troubled thought, and thenceforth she found anew the full charm and security of friendship.

They saw each other, then, every day, and even sometimes for long hours together, in the drawing-room, almost under the eyes of the Marchioness, who rejoiced to see that Caroline continued to aid the Marquis in his labors. In fact, she assisted him now only with her memory: having arranged his documents in the country, he wrote his third and last volume with admirable swiftness and readiness. Caroline's presence gave him enthusiasm and inspiration. By her side, he no longer suffered from doubt or weariness. She had become so indispensable to him that he confessed his lack of interest in anything when alone. He was pleased to have her talk to him even in the midst of his work. Far from disturbing him this dearly loved voice preserved the harmony of his thought and the elevation of his style. He challenged her to disturb him, he begged her to read music at the piano, without fear of causing him the least annoyance. On the contrary, all that made him sensible of her presence fell on his soul like a pleasant warmth; for she was to him, not another person moving about

near him, but his own mind which he could see and feel alive before him.

Her respect for his work, over which she was enthusiastic, bound Caroline to a certain respect for him personally. She made it a sacred duty, as it were, not, in any way, to disturb the balance needful to a mind so finely organized. She refused to think of herself any longer. She no longer asked herself whether she was not running some risk on her own score, or whether, at a given time, she would be strong enough to give up this intimacy which was becoming the groundwork of her own life.

The matrimonial alliance between the Duke d'Aléria and Mlle. de Xaintrailles progressed with encouraging rapidity. The beautiful Diana was seriously in love and would not hear a word against Gaëtan. The Duchess de Dunières, having herself made a love-match with a veteran lady-killer, who had reformed on the strength of it and now rendered her perfectly happy, took the part of her god-daughter, and pleaded her cause so well that her guardians and the legal advisers of the family had to give way before the known will of the heiress.

The latter told her betrothed, even before he had expressed any wish to this effect, that she intended to pay off his indebtedness to the Marquis, and the Marquis had to accept the promise of a reparation which this high-minded young girl made one condition of the marriage. All the Marquis could obtain was that they should not restore to him the share in his mother's property which he had resigned when Madame de Villemer had been obliged to pay the debts of her eldest son for the first time. According to the Marquis, his mother had a right to dispose of her own fortune during her lifetime; and he regarded himself as entirely indemnified since the Marchioness was to live henceforth at the Hôtel de Xaintrailles and in the castles of her daughter-in-law, far more splendid than the little manor of Séval and much nearer Paris, thus living no longer at his expense.

In these family arrangements all parties showed the most exquisite delicacy and the most honorable generosity. Caroline directed the attention of the Marquis to this fact in order to make

him insist, in his book, upon certain just reservations in favor of families where the true idea of nobility still served as the basis of real virtues.

In fact, here each one did his duty: Mlle. de Xaintrailles would have no marriage-contract which, in protecting her fortune from her husband's lavish expenditures, should contain any clauses likely to wound his pride; while the Duke, on the other hand, insisted that the right of dowry should bind the wings of his magnificent improvidence. So it was specified with considerable flourish in the document that this stipulation was introduced at the request of the future bridegroom, and in compliance with his express wishes.

Everything being thus settled, the Marchioness found herself a sharer in a most generous style of living; and although she had declared herself satisfied with a simple promise and willing to rely on the discretion of her children, a very handsome income had been secured to her by the same contract in which the future bride had done so many other liberal and considerate things; the Marquis, on his side, became repossessed of capital enough to represent an ample competence. It is needless to state that he took the recovery of this fortune as calmly as he had borne the loss of it.

While the outfit of the bride was preparing, the Duke busied himself about his presents for her, the funds for their purchase having been forced upon his acceptance by his brother, as a wedding gift. What an affair it was for the Duke to choose diamonds and laces and cashmeres! He understood the lofty science of the toilet better than the most accomplished woman. He hardly found time to eat, passing his days in waiting upon his betrothed, consulting jewellers, merchants, and embroiderers, and telling his mother, who was equally excited over it all, the thousand incidents and even the surprising dramas connected with his marvellous acquisitions. Into the midst of all this heavy fire, in which Caroline and Urbain took only a modest share, Madame d'Arglade glided, as if in her own despite.

A great event had overturned Léonie's

way of life and all her plans. At the beginning of the winter, her husband, twenty years her senior and for some time past an invalid, had succumbed to a chronic disease, leaving his affairs complicated enough ; though she came out of her embarrassments in triumphant style, thanks to a lucky stroke at the Bourse, for she had gambled in stocks a long time without the knowledge of M. d'Arglade, and had at last laid hands on a fortunate number in the great lottery. So she found herself a widow, still young and handsome, and richer than she had ever been before, all which did not hinder her shedding so many and such big tears that people said of her with admiration, "This poor little woman was really attached to her duty, in spite of her frivolous ways ! Certainly M. d'Arglade was not a husband to go distracted over, but she has such a warm heart that she is inconsolable." And thus she was pitied, and many took pains to amuse her : the Marchioness, seriously interested, insisted that she should come and pass her solitary afternoons with her. Nothing was more proper ; it was not going into company, for the Marchioness received no visitors until four or five o'clock ; it was not even going out, for Léonie could come in a cab without much of a toilet, and as if incognito. Léonie allowed herself to be consoled and amused by watching the preparations for the wedding, and sometimes the Duke would succeed in making her laugh outright ; which did very well, because, passing from one kind of nervous excitement to another, she would immediately begin to sob, hiding her face in her handkerchief and saying, "How cruel you are to make me laugh ! It does me so much harm."

Through all her despair, Léonie was contriving to win the intimate confidence of the Marchioness so as insensibly to supplant Caroline, who did not perceive this, and was a thousand leagues from suspecting her designs. Now Léonie's main project was this : —

As she saw the health of her disagreeable husband becoming impaired and her own private purse filling out round, Madame d'Arglade asked herself what kind of a successor she should

give him, and, as she had not yet been confidentially informed of the marriage already arranged with Mlle. de Xaintrailles, she had resolved to confer the right to the vacant living upon the Duke d'Aléria. She thought him "ineligible," on the conditions of fortune united to youth and rank, and said to herself, not without logic and plausibility, that the widow of a respectable and wealthy gentleman, without children, was the best match to which a penniless prodigal, reduced to going on foot and reckoning up accounts with his body-servant, could possibly aspire. Léonie then had no doubt of her success, and while busying herself with much skill in the investment of her capital she said to herself in supreme calm, "Now all is finished, I have plenty of money, I will speculate no more, I will intrigue no more. My ambition, satiated in this direction, must change its object. I must efface the birth-mark of plebeianism, which still incommodes me in society. I must have a title. That of Duchess is well worth the trouble of some thought !"

She had indeed thought of it in time, but M. d'Arglade died too late. She had scarcely laid aside her first mourning crapes, when, on her earliest visit to the Marchioness, she learned that she must think of it no longer.

Léonie then turned her batteries on the Marquis de Villemer. This was less brilliant and more difficult, but still it was satisfactory as a title, and, from her point of view, not impossible. The Marchioness was extremely anxious about her son's bachelor state, the prospect of which as a permanency seemed to have new charms for him in his negligence. She opened her heart to Madame d'Arglade. "He really frightens me," said she, "with his tranquil air. I fear he may have some prejudice — I know not what — against marriage, perhaps against women in general. He is more than timid, he is unsociable, and yet he is charming when you succeed in winning him into familiarity. He needs to meet some woman who will fall in love with him herself first, and then have courage enough to make him love her in return."

Léonie profited by these revelations.

"Ah! yes," replied she, giddily, "he needs a wife of higher position than mine, one who is not the widow of the best of men; but somebody who would still have my age, my wealth, and my disposition."

"Your disposition is too impulsive for a man so reserved, my darling."

"And that is why a person of my character would save him. You know about extremes. If I could love any one, which now, alas! is totally impossible, I should certainly fancy a man who is serious and cold. Dear me! Alas! was not that the temperament of my poor husband? Well, his gravity tempered my vivacity, and my liveliness let sunshine into his melancholy. That was his way of putting it, and how often he would mention it! He had never been in love before he met me, and he also had precisely this distaste for marriage. The first time he saw me, he was a little afraid of my frivolity; but all at once he saw that I was necessary to his life, because this apparent thoughtlessness, which you know does n't hinder one from having a good heart, passed into his soul like a light, like a balm. These were his very words, poor dear man! There! stop! let us not talk about people who marry. It makes me feel too keenly that I am alone forever!"

Léonie found means to touch upon the subject so often and under so many different forms, with so much tact under an air of innocence, with so many civilities clothed in apparent indifference, that the idea entered the mind of the Marchioness almost without her being conscious of it, and when Madame d'Arglade saw she was not disposed to reject it absolutely in the proper time and place, she began a direct attack on M. de Villemer with the same cunning, the same charming heedlessness, the same silence of conjugal despair, the same frank insinuations, bringing about the whole and carrying it on before the eyes of Caroline, about whom she did not trouble herself at all.

But the chatter of Madame d'Arglade was disagreeable to the Marquis; and, if she had never found this out, it was only because she had never provoked him into taking any notice of her what-

ever. Far from being the inexperienced savage he was supposed to be, he had a very fine tact with regard to women; so, at the first assault which Léonie made, he understood her designs, perceived all her intrigues, and made her feel this so thoroughly that she was wounded to the very heart.

From that time she opened her eyes, and, in a thousand delicate indications detected the boundless love Mlle. de Saint-Geneix had inspired in the Marquis. She rejoiced over this greatly: she thought it was in her power to revenge herself, and she waited for the right moment.

The marriage of the Duke was appointed for one of the first days of January; but there were so many outcries in certain rigid drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain against the readiness with which the Duchess de Dunières had welcomed the suit of this great sinner, that she determined to avoid the reproach of undue precipitation by delaying the happiness of the young pair for three months, and introducing her god-daughter into society. This postponement did not alarm the Duke, but vexed the Marchioness exceedingly, for she was eager to open a really grand drawing-room, on her own responsibility, with a charming daughter-in-law, who would attract young faces around her. Madame d'Arglade, under pretext of business, became less assiduous in her visits, and Caroline resumed her duties.

She was much less impatient than the Marchioness to live at the Hôtel de Xaintrailles and to change her habits. The Marquis had not decided to accept an apartment at his brother's, and did not explain his own personal plans. Caroline was alarmed at this, and yet she saw, in his indifference to being under the same roof with her, one proof of the calm regard she had exacted from him; but she had now reached that stage of affection when logic is often found at fault in the depths of the heart. She silently enjoyed her last happy days, and when spring came, for the first time in her life, she regretted winter.

Mlle. de Xaintrailles had taken Mlle. de Saint-Geneix into high favor, and

even into a close friendship; while, on the contrary, she felt a decided dislike for Madame d'Arglade, whom she met occasionally of a morning at the house of her future mother-in-law, where she herself made no formal visits, but only came with Madame and Mlle. de Dunières at hours when none but intimate friends were received. Léonie pretended not to see this slight haughtiness in the beautiful Diana. She thought she had a hold on her happiness also, and that she could revenge herself upon her and upon Caroline at one and the same time.

She was not invited to the wedding festivities; her mourning, of course, preventing her appearance there. However, from regard to the Marchioness, toward whom Diana showed herself really perfect, a few brief words of regret, as to this deprivation, were said to her. That was all. Caroline, on the other hand, was chosen as a bridesmaid, and loaded with gifts, by the future Duchess d'Aléria.

At last the great day arrived, and for the first time, after many years of sorrow and misery, Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, dressed in elegant taste, and even with a certain richness, through the gifts of the bride, appeared in all the splendor of her beauty and grace. She created a lively sensation, and every one inquired where this delightful unknown could have come from. Diana replied, "She is a friend of mine, a very superior person who is under the care of my mother-in-law, and whom I am delighted to see established so near me."

The Marquis danced with the bride and also with Mlle. de Dunières, in order that he might afterwards dance with Mlle. de Saint-Geneix. Caroline was so astonished at this that she could not help saying to him in a low voice, and with a smile, "How is this? After having stood by each other through the establishment of allodial rule and the enfranchisement of the lower classes, now we are going to dance a contradance!"

"Yea," he replied, quickly, "and this will go much better, for I shall feel your hand in mine."

It was the first time the Marquis had openly shown Caroline an emotion in which the senses had any part. Now

she was sensible of his trembling hand and his eager eyes. She was frightened; but reminded herself that he had seemed to be in love with her once before and had triumphed over the ill-advised thought. With a man so pure and of such high morality ought she to feel afraid, even if he did forget himself for an instant? And besides, had she not herself experienced this vague intoxication of love even when her will was strong enough to subdue it at once? She could not help being aware of her own extraordinary beauty, for every eye told her of it. She eclipsed the bride herself in her diamonds, with her seventeen years, and her fine smile of fond triumph. The dowagers said to the Duchess de Dunières, "That poor orphan you have there is too pretty: it is disquieting!" The sons of the Duchess herself, young men of dignity and great promise, looked at Mlle. de Saint-Geneix in a way that justified the apprehensions of these experienced matrons. The Duke, touched by seeing that his generous wife had not thought of harboring the slightest jealous suspicion, and also appreciating Caroline's considerate attitude toward him, showed her especial attention. The Marchioness, not to spoil this delightful day, made a point of treating her more maternally than ever, and of dispelling every shadow of servitude. In short, she was in one of those moments of life, when, in spite of fortune's caprices, the power which intelligence, honor, and beauty naturally exert seem to reclaim its rights and to reconquer its place in the world.

But if Caroline read her triumph on all faces, it was especially in the eyes of M. de Villemer that she could assure herself of it. She also noticed how this mysterious man had altered since that first day when he had appeared so timid, so self-absorbed, as if obstinately bent on remaining in obscurity. He was now as elegant in his manners as his elder brother, with more true grace and real distinction; for the Duke, in spite of his great knowledge of demeanor, had a little of that bearing, a shade too fine and slightly theatrical, which is characteristic of the Spanish race. The Marquis was of the French type in all

its unaffected ease, in all its amiable kindness, in that particular charm which does not impress but wins. He danced, that is, he walked through the contra-dance more simply than any one else; but the purity of his life had imparted to his motions, his countenance, his whole being, a perfume, as one might say, of extraordinary youth. He seemed, this evening, to be ten years younger than his brother, and a certain indescribable glow of hope gave his face the brightness of a beautiful life just commencing.

XIX.

At midnight, the newly married couple, having discreetly disappeared, the Marchioness signified to her son that she was tired and would like to withdraw. "Give me your arm, dear child," said she, when he came to her side; "let us not disturb Caroline, who is dancing; I will leave her under the protection of Madame de D——."

And as the Marquis was helping her through the corridor leading to her own room on the lower floor,—they had been considerate enough to humor her distrust of staircases, "My dear son," she said, "you will no longer have the trouble of carrying on your arm your poor little bundle of a mother. You did it very often when you were with us at the other house, and with you I did not seem afraid; but it pained me to give you the trouble."

"And I—I shall regret that lost pleasure," said Urbain.

"How elegant and aristocratic this reception is!" resumed the Marchioness, having at last reached her apartment; "and this Caroline who is its queen! I am astonished at the beauty and grace the little creature has."

"Mother," said the Marquis, "are you really very tired just now? and if I should ask fifteen minutes' conversation with you—"

"Let us talk, my son, by all means!" cried the Marchioness. "I was tired only because I could not talk with those I love. And then I was afraid of seeming ridiculous, in case I said too much

about my happiness. Let us speak of it, let us speak of your brother, and of yourself as well! Come, will you not bring a second day like this into my life?"

"Dear mother," said the Marquis, kneeling before her and taking both her hands in his, "it depends upon you alone whether I, too, shall soon have my day of supreme joy."

"Ah! what do you say? Truly! Tell me quickly then!"

"Yes, I will speak. This is the moment I was waiting for; I have held myself in reserve, and turned all my longings toward this blessed hour, when my brother, reconciled to God, to truth, and to himself, could take a wife worthy to be your daughter. And when such a moment came I intended to say this: Mother, I also can present you with a second daughter, more lovely than the first and no less pure. For a year, for more than a year, I have devotedly loved a most perfect being. She has suspected this perhaps, but she does not know it; I have so much respect and esteem for her that without your consent I well knew I should never gain her own. Besides, she gave me to understand this sharply one day, one single day, when my secret came near escaping me in spite of myself, four months ago, and I have since kept strict silence in her presence and in yours. It was my duty not to plunge you into anxieties which, thank God! no longer exist. Your fate, my brother's, and my own are henceforth secure. Now, comfortably rich, I may properly refuse to enlarge my fortune, and I can marry according to my inclinations. You have a sacrifice to make for me nevertheless; but your motherly love will not refuse, for it involves the happiness of my whole life. This lady belongs to an honorable family; you made sure of this yourself before you admitted her to intimacy with you; but she does not belong to one of those ancient and illustrious lines, for which you have a preference that I do not mean to oppose. I said you would have to make a sacrifice for me; will you do it? Do you love me enough? Yes, mother, yes, your heart, which I can feel beating, will yield without regret,

in its vast maternal tenderness, to the prayer of a son who worships you."

"Ah, bless me! you are speaking of Caroline," cried the Marchioness, trembling. "Stop, stop, my son! The shock is rude, and I was not prepared for it."

"O, do not say that!" resumed the Marquis, warmly; "if the shock is too rude, I do not want you to bear it. I will give it all up; I will never marry —"

"Never marry! Why, that would be worse still! Come, come, do let me know where I am! It is, perhaps, easier to bear than it seems. It is not so much her birth. Her father was knighted: that's nothing very great; but if that was really all! There is this poverty which has fallen upon her. You may tell me that but for you I should have fallen into it myself; but I should have died, while she — she has courage to work for a living, and to accept a kind of domestic service —"

"Heavens!" cried the Marquis, "would you make a blemish of what is the crowning merit of her life?"

"No, no, not I," returned the Marchioness, eagerly, "quite the contrary; but the world is so —"

"So unjust and so blind!"

"That is true too, and I was wrong to let it influence me. Come! we are in the midst of love-matches, so I have only one more objection to make. Caroline is twenty-five years old —"

"And I am now over thirty-four myself."

"It is not that. She is young enough, if her heart is as pure, as unsophisticated as your own; but she has been in love before."

"No. I know her whole life. I have conversed with her sister; she was to have married, but she has never really loved."

"Still, between this projected marriage and the time when she came to us some years must have elapsed —"

"I have inquired about this. I know her life day by day and almost hour by hour. If I tell you that Mlle. de Saint-Geneix is worthy of you and of me, it is because I know it. A foolish passion has not blinded me. No, a serious love based upon reflection, upon comparison with all other women, upon certainty,

has given me strength to keep silence and to wait, wishing to convince you on good grounds."

The Marquis talked with his mother some time longer, and he triumphed. He used all the eloquence of passion, and all that filial tenderness of which he had given so many proofs. His mother was touched and yielded.

"Well, now," cried the Marquis, "will you let me call her here on your behalf? Are you willing that, for the first time, — in your presence, at your feet, — I should tell her that I love her? See, I yet dare not tell her alone! One cold look, one word of distrust, would break my heart. Here, in your presence, I can speak, I will convince her."

"My son," said the Marchioness, "you have my promise. And you see," added she, taking him in her feeble arms, "if I have not given it with very impulsive joy, it is at least with tenderness unlimited and unalloyed. I ask, I exact one single thing; that is, that you will take twenty-four hours to reflect upon your position. It is new, for here you are in possession of my consent, which you thought more than doubtful an hour ago. Up to that time you believed yourself parted from Mlle. de Saint-Geneix by obstacles that you did not think of overcoming so easily, perhaps, and this may have given illusive strength to your feelings for her. Don't shake your head! What do you know about it yourself? Besides, what I ask is a very little thing, — twenty-four hours without speaking to her, that is all. For myself, I feel the need of accepting completely before God the decision I have just reached; that my face, my agitation, my tears, may not lead Caroline to suspect that it has cost me something —"

"O yes, you are right," exclaimed the Marquis. "If she suspected that, she never would let me speak to her. To-morrow, then, dear mother. Twenty-four hours, did you say? It is very long! And then, — it is one o'clock in the morning. Will you be up again to-morrow night?"

"Yes, for we have a concert to-morrow at the apartments of the young Duchess. You see why we must sleep to-night. Are you going back to the ball-room?"

"Ah! please let me: she is there still, and she is so lovely with her white dress and the pearls. I have not looked at her enough, really. I did not dare — now only shall I truly see her."

"Well! make this sacrifice for me in your turn, not to look at her again, — not to speak to her before to-morrow evening. Promise me, as you have no idea of sleeping, to think of her, of me, and of yourself, all alone, for a few hours, and then again to-morrow morning. You are not to come here before dinner-time. You must not; promise me!"

The Marquis promised and kept his word; but the solitude, the darkness, the pain of not seeing Caroline, and of leaving her surrounded by the notice and homage of others, only increased his impatience, only fed the fire of his passion. Besides, his mother's precautions, although wise in themselves, were of no use to a man who had been reflecting and deciding so long.

Caroline was surprised not to see the Marquis reappear, and was one of the first to withdraw, — trying to persuade herself she had not been mistaken in thinking he would soon recover his self-control. She was, as will be seen, far from suspecting the truth.

Madame d'Arglade had her spies at this ball, and among others a man who desired to marry her, a secretary of legation, who, the next morning, reported to her the great success of the "young lady companion." The devotion of the Marquis had not escaped malevolent eyes, and the diplomatic apprentice had even scented out an interesting conversation between the Marquis and his mother, as they left the room together.

Léonie listened to this report with apparent indifference; but she said to herself it was time to act, and at noon she was inquiring for the Marchioness at the very moment Caroline appeared.

"One minute, my dear friend," said she to Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, "let me go in before you do; it is an urgent matter, — a kindness to be done for some poor people who wish to remain unknown."

Once alone with the Marchioness, she apologized for coming to speak about the poor in these days of re-

joicing. "They are, on the contrary, the days of the poor," replied the generous lady; "speak. One of my great joys now will be that I can do more good than I could awhile ago."

Léonie had her pretext all prepared. When she had presented her request, and put the Marchioness down on her subscription-list, she pretended that she was in haste to go, so as to be invited to stay a little while. It is useless to relate the skilful turns and tricks by which she maliciously contrived to reach the interesting point of the conversation. These mean-spirited attacks, unhappily too common, will be remembered by all those who have ever felt their cruel effects; and they are very few who have been forgotten by calumny.

They naturally spoke of Gaëtan's happiness and about the perfections of the young Duchess. "What I love most in her," said Léonie, "is that she is n't jealous of any one, not even of — Oh! beg pardon, the name was just going to escape me."

She returned to this subject several times, refusing to mention the name until the Marchioness began to grow uneasy. At last it did escape her, and the name was that of Caroline.

She hastened to take it back, to say her tongue had tripped; but in ten minutes the blow had been dealt by a sure hand, and the Marchioness had drawn from her a solemn asseveration that she had seen, with her own eyes seen, at Séval, the Duke conducting Caroline back to her room at daybreak, and holding both her hands in his, talking to her eagerly, for three good minutes, at the foot of the Renard stairway.

Upon this she made the Marchioness, whose word she knew was sacred, promise not to betray her, not to make her enemies, — because so far she had never had any; saying she was in despair at the persistence which had drawn this disclosure from her, that she would have done better to disobey the Marchioness outright, that at heart she really loved Caroline, and that, after all, since she had answered for her character, it was, perhaps, her duty to confess that she had been mistaken.

"Bah!" exclaimed the Marchioness,

thoroughly mistress of herself, "all this is not so serious. She may have been very good otherwise, and yet have been impressed by this irresistible Duke. He is so skilful! Have no fear. I am to know nothing of this, and I will act at the proper time and place, if need be, without its appearing at all."

When Caroline entered just as Léonie was going, the latter extended her hand with a good-natured air, telling her that the news of her triumph the evening before had reached her even, and that she offered her congratulations.

Caroline found the Marchioness so pale as to arouse her anxiety, and on asking the cause she received a very cool reply. "It is the fatigue of all this festivity," said the Marchioness; "it is nothing. Be so good as to read me my letters."

While Caroline was reading Madame de Villemer did not listen. She was thinking of what she was going to do. She was concealing deep indignation against the young girl, a violent grief at the blow she would have to inflict on the Marquis; and with this maternal sorrow mingled the involuntary satisfaction of a titled lady at being released from a promise which had cost her much, and to which, for twelve hours, she had not recurred without a shudder.

When she had reached her decision, she interrupted the reading harshly, saying, in an icy tone, "That is enough, Mlle. de Saint-Genex. I want to speak with you seriously. One of my sons, I need not say which, seems lately to have entertained sentiments for you which you surely have not encouraged?"

Caroline turned as pale as the Marchioness; but, strong in her own conscience, she replied without hesitation, "I am ignorant of what you assert, Madame. Neither of your sons has ever expressed to me any sentiments at which I could be seriously alarmed."

The Marchioness took this reply for an audacious falsehood. She flung at the poor girl one contemptuous look, and for a moment was silent; then she resumed, "I shall not speak of the Duke; it is entirely useless to defend yourself on this point."

"I have no complaint to make of him or of his brother," replied Caroline.

"I suppose not!" said the Marchioness, with a withering smile; "but as for me, I should have good cause for complaint if you had the presumption —"

Caroline interrupted the Marchioness with a violence she could not control. "I have shown no presumption," cried she, "and no one in the world has a right to speak to me as if I were to blame, or even ridiculous — Pardon, Madame," added she, seeing the Marchioness almost frightened by her excitement; "I have interrupted you. I have spoken rudely. Forgive me. I love you, — I love you so that I would give you my life willingly. You see why your suspicion hurts me so that I lose my temper. But I ought to control myself; I will control myself! I see there is some misunderstanding between us. Be so good as to explain — or question me. I will answer with all the calmness in my power."

"My dear Caroline," said the Marchioness, more gently, "I do not question you. I warn you. It is not my intention to condemn you or sadden you with useless questions. You were mistress of your own heart —"

"No, Madame, I was not."

"Indeed! Very well, the truth comes out in spite of you," said the Marchioness, with a return of her ironical disdain.

"No, a hundred times no!" rejoined Caroline, indignantly. "That is not what I mean. Knowing that a thousand duties, some more serious than others, forbade me to dispose of it, I have given it to no one."

The Marchioness looked at Caroline with astonishment. "How well she understands lying!" thought Madame de Villemer. Then she said to herself that, so far as the Duke was concerned, this poor girl was not obliged to betray herself; that the feeling she had entertained for him ought to be regarded just as if it had never been, since, after all, she had made him no trouble and claimed no rights detrimental to his marriage.

This idea, which had but just occurred to her, suddenly mollified the rancor of the Marchioness; and when she saw her silence was wounding Caroline, whose eyes were full of scalding tears,

she returned to her friendship for her, and even to a new kind of esteem.

"My dear little one," said she, extending her hands to her, "forgive me! I have hurt your feelings; I have explained myself wretchedly. Let us even admit I was unjust for a moment. In point of fact I understand you better than you think, and I appreciate your conduct. You are unselfish, prudent, generous, and wise. If you have chanced — to think more of certain attentions than was for your own happiness, it is none the less certain you have always stood ready to make sacrifices on occasion, and you would be ready to do the same again; it is so, is it not?"

Caroline did not comprehend, and could not comprehend that in all this there was an allusion to Gaëtan's marriage. She thought only his brother's case was called in question; and as she had never relaxed her self-control for a moment, she felt as if the Marchioness had no right to pry into the painful secrets of her heart. "I have never had any sacrifice to make," replied she, haughtily. "If you have orders for me give them, Madame, and do not think it any merit on my part to obey you."

"You mean to say, and you do say, my dear, that you have never responded to the sentiments of the Marquis?"

"I have never known them."

"You had never suspected them?"

"No, Madame; and I do not believe in them! Who could have made you suppose the contrary? Certainly not the Marquis himself."

"Well, pardon me, but it was he. You see what confidence I have in you. I tell you the truth. I trust to your generosity without hesitation. My son loves you and thinks he may have won your love in return."

"Monsieur the Marquis is strangely mistaken," replied Caroline, wounded by an avowal which, presented thus, was almost an offence.

"Ah! you are telling the truth now, I see that," cried the Marchioness, deceived by the pride of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix; and wishing to control her by means of her self-respect, the old lady kissed her on the forehead. "Thank you, my dear child," said she, "you re-

store me to life. You are sincere; you are too noble to punish my doubts by trifling with my peace. Very well; now let me tell my son Urbain that he has been only dreaming, that this marriage is impossible, not through my opposition, but through yours."

This imprudent request enlightened Caroline. She understood the admirable delicacy which had led the Marquis to consult his mother before declaring his feelings to her; but she was not deluded by this discovery, for she saw how much the Marchioness disliked the idea of their marriage. She attributed this severity to the ambition of Madame de Villemer, which she had known perfectly and feared for a long time. She was very far from thinking that, after having yielded the point with a good grace, the Marchioness was now withdrawing her consent because she believed in the stain of a fault. "Madame de Villemer," replied she, with a certain severity, "you are never wrong in the eyes of your son. I understand that; and I fear no reproaches from him, if, on my own part, I decline the honor he would do me. Over and above this you can tell him what you think best; I shall not be here to contradict you."

"What! do you want to leave me?" cried Madame de Villemer, alarmed at a conclusion which she did not expect so suddenly, although she had secretly desired it. "No, no, that is impossible! It would ruin everything. My son loves you with an earnestness, — whose future consequences I do not fear, if you will help me to contend against them, but whose violence at the first moment I do fear. Stop! He would follow you, perhaps; he is eloquent, he would triumph over your resistance, he would bring you back, and I should be forced to tell him — what I never want to tell him."

"You will never have to say 'No' to him!" replied Caroline, still under a delusion, and nowise suspecting this menace of her pretended misconduct hanging over her head; "it is I who should tell him, is it not? Well then I will write to him, and my letter shall pass through your hands."

"But his grief — his anger, perhaps — have you thought of that?"

"Madame, let me go away!" replied Caroline, desperately, for the thought of this grief touched her heart. "I did not come here to suffer in this way. I was brought here without even being told that you had sons. Let me leave you without trouble as well as without blame. I will never see M. de Villemer again; this is all I can promise. If he should follow me —"

"Do not doubt that he will! For Heaven's sake, speak lower! What if any one should hear you! In case he should follow you, what would you do?"

"I shall go where he cannot follow me. Permit me to arrange this according to my own judgment. In an hour I will return to take leave of you, Madame de Villemer."

XX.

Mlle. de Saint-Geneix went out with such energetic resolution that Madame de Villemer dared not say another word to detain her. She saw that Caroline was irritated and hurt. She blamed herself for having made it too evident that "she knew all," while the poor woman actually knew nothing, for she did not perceive Caroline's real affection.

So far was she from this that she tried to persuade herself Caroline had always loved the Duke, that she had sacrificed herself to his happiness, or that, perhaps, like a practical girl, she was counting upon the return of his friendship after the honeymoon of his marriage. "In the latter case," thought the Marchioness, "it would be dangerous to let her remain in the house. Some time or other it would bring unhappiness into my young household; but it is too soon to have her go away — and so abruptly: the Marquis would be almost insane. She will grow calm, lay her plans, and whenever she returns with them I will persuade her to accommodate herself to mine."

For an hour, then, the Marchioness was engaged upon her own plans. She would see her son again that evening, as had been agreed, and would tell him that she had sounded Caroline's incli-

nations, and found her very cold toward him. For several days she would avoid the decisive explanation. She would gain time, she would induce Caroline herself to discourage him, but gently and with prudence. In a word she was planning to control the fates, when she saw the hour had passed and Caroline had failed to come. She inquired for her. She was told that Mlle. de Saint-Geneix had gone away in a hackney-coach with a very small bundle, leaving behind the following letter: —

"MADAME DE VILLEMER, —

"I have just received the sad news that one of my sister's children is seriously ill. Pardon me for hastening to her at once without having asked your leave; you have visitors. Besides, I know how kind you are; you will surely give me twenty-four hours. I shall be back by to-morrow evening. Receive the assurance of my tender and profound regard.

CAROLINE."

"Well now, that is admirable!" said the Marchioness to herself after a moment of surprise and fright. "She enters into my ideas; she has enabled me to win the first evening, the hardest of all certainly. By promising to come back to-morrow night she keeps my son from rushing away to Étampes. To-morrow probably she will have a new pretext for not returning — But I would rather not know what she means to do. I shall then be sure that the Marquis will never get the truth from me."

Nevertheless, the evening came too soon for her comfort. Her fears increased as she saw the hour approaching when they would have to dine together.

If Caroline had really fled a little farther than Étampes, it was necessary to gain time. She then decided upon telling an untruth. She never spoke to her son until they were just seating themselves at table, contriving to keep herself surrounded by others. It was a great dinner, very ceremonious; but unable to bear the anxious gaze which he fastened upon her, before taking her seat she said to the young Duchess, in such a way as to be overheard by the Marquis, "Mlle. de Saint-Geneix will not come to dinner. She has a little

niece ill at the convent, and has asked leave to go and see her."

Immediately after dinner the Marquis, tortured with anxiety, tried to speak to his mother. She avoided him again; but, seeing him preparing to go out, she made signs for him to come near and whispered to him: "She has n't gone to the convent, but to Étampes."

"Then why did n't you tell us so awhile ago?"

"I was mistaken. I had scarcely read the note, which was just given me this evening. It is not the little girl who is mentioned, but another of the children; however, she will return to-morrow morning. Come! there is nothing alarming in this. Be careful, my son, your bewildered face astonishes every one. There are ill-disposed persons everywhere: what if some one should happen to think and say that you were envious of your brother's happiness! It is known that at first it was you —"

"Ah! mother, that is the very thing! You are keeping something from me. It is Caroline who is ill. She is here, I am sure of it. Let me inquire on your behalf —"

"Do you want to compromise her, then? That would be no way to prepossess her in your favor."

"She is not well disposed toward me, then? Mother, you have spoken to her."

"No, I have n't seen her; she went away this morning."

"You said the note came this evening."

"I received it — some time, I can't tell when; but these questions are not very amiable, my son. Pray be calm; we are observed."

The poor mother did not know how to tell a lie. Her son's anguish pierced her to the heart. She struggled for an hour against the sight. Every time he approached a door, she followed him with a glance which plainly told of her fear that he would go: their eyes would meet, and the Marquis would remain, as if held by his mother's anxiety. She could not bear this long. She was broken down by the fatigue of the emotions she had endured for twenty-four hours; by the excitement of the fes-

tivity which, for several days, she had been trying to enliven with all her cleverness; and above all, by the violent effort she had made since dinner, to appear calm. She had herself conducted back to her own apartment, and there fainted in the arms of the Marquis, who had followed her.

Urbain lavished the most tender care on his mother, reproaching himself a thousand times for having agitated her; assuring her that he was composed, that he would not ask another question until she had recovered. He watched over her the whole night. The next day, finding her perfectly well, he ventured upon a few timid questions. She showed him Caroline's note, and he waited patiently until evening. The evening brought a fresh note, dated at Étampes. The child was better, but still so poorly that Madame Heudebert desired to keep Caroline twenty-four hours longer.

The Marquis promised to be patient for twenty-four hours more; but the next day, deceiving his mother with the pretence of going to ride with his brother and sister, he set out for Étampes.

There he learned that Caroline had really been with her sister, but had just set out again for Paris. They must have passed each other on the way. It occurred to the Marquis that on his arrival, which was evidently anticipated, one of the children was kept out of sight, and silence enjoined upon the others. He inquired after the little invalid, and asked to see him. Camille replied that he was asleep and she was afraid to wake him. M. de Villemer dared not urge the matter, and returned to Paris seriously doubting Madame Heudebert's sincerity, and wholly unable to explain her embarrassed and absent-minded ways.

He hastened to his mother's; but Caroline had not made her reappearance; she was perhaps at the convent. He went there to wait for her before the iron grate, and at the close of an hour he made up his mind to ask for her in the name of Madame de Villemer. He was told that she had not been seen there for the last five days. He returned a second time to the Hôtel de Xaintrilles; he awaited the evening; his

mother still seemed ill, and he controlled himself. But on the morrow his courage finally broke down, and he sobbed at her feet, begging her to restore Caroline, whom he still believed hidden in the convent by her orders.

Madame de Villemer really knew nothing further about it. She began to share her son's uneasiness. However, Caroline had taken with her only a very small bundle of clothing; she could have had but little money, for she was in the habit of sending it all, as soon as she received it, to her family. She had left her jewels and her books behind; so she could not be very far off.

While the Marquis was returning to the convent with a letter from his mother, who, overcome by his grief, was now really anxious to have him find Caroline again, — the young lady, wrapped up and veiled to her chin, was alighting from a diligence just arrived from Brioude, and, carrying her own bundle, was making her way alone along the picturesque boulevard of the town of Le Puy in Velay, toward the station of another little stage-coach, which was just then setting out for Issingaux.

No one saw her face or thought of troubling himself to do so. She asked no questions, and seemed thoroughly acquainted with the country, its customs, and its localities.

Nevertheless, she was there for the first time; but, resolute, active, and cautious, she had before leaving Paris bought a guide-book, with a plan of the town and the surrounding country, which she had carefully studied on the way. She then got into the diligence for Issingaux, telling the driver she would stop at Brives, that is, at about a league from Le Puy. There she alighted at the bridge of the Loire, and disappeared, without asking her way of any one. She knew she had to follow the Loire until it met the Gâgne; then, directing her course toward the Red Rock, again follow the bed of the torrent flowing at its foot until she reached the first village. There could be no possible mistake. There were about three leagues to be traversed on foot in a wilderness, and it was midnight; but the road was smooth, and the moon

came out clearly in a beautiful half-globe from among the great white clouds, driven back to the horizon by the winds of May.

Where, then, was Mlle. de Saint-Geneix going in this fashion, in the depths of the night and the wilds of the mountain, through a bewildering country? Has it been forgotten that she had here, in the village of Lantriac, devoted friends and the safest of all retreats? Her nurse, the good-wife Peyraque, formerly Justine Lanion, had written her a second letter, about six weeks before, and Caroline, remembering with certainty that she had never mentioned to the Marquis or to any one of the family these letters, or these people, or this country, had accepted the stern suggestion of going there for a month or so, thus making sure that all traces of herself would be entirely lost. Thence arose her precautions against being recognized on the way, and against exciting chance curiosity by asking questions.

She had gone to Étampes to embrace her sister, and, after having told her all and intrusted her with all, except the secret feelings which disturbed her, she had burned her ships behind her by leaving a letter which, at the end of the week, was to be forwarded to Madame de Villemer. In this letter she announced that she had gone abroad, pretending to have found employment there, and begging that no anxiety should be felt on her account.

Cumbered with her bundle, she was planning to leave it at the first house where she could effect an entrance, when she became aware of a train of ox-teams coming behind her. She waited for it. A family of teamsters, young and old, with a woman holding a child asleep under her cape, were transporting some great hewn logs, — intended to serve as carpenters' timber, — by means of a pair of solid little wheels, bound with ropes to each end of the log. There were six of these logs, each drawn by a yoke of oxen with a driver walking beside them. It was a caravan, which occupied a long space on the road.

"Providence," thought Caroline, "always helps those who rely upon it."

Here are carriages to choose from if I am weary."

She spoke to the first teamster. He shook his head: he understood only the dialect of the country. The second stopped, made her repeat her words, then shrugged his shoulders and resumed his walk: he understood no better than the first. A third made signs for her to address his wife, who was seated on one of the logs, her feet supported by a rope. Caroline asked her, as she walked along, if they were going in the direction of Laussonne. She did not wish to mention the name of Lantriac, which was nearer, on the same road. The woman replied in French of very harsh accent, that they were going to Laussonne, and that it was "far off, — yes, indeed!"

"Will you let me fasten my bundle to one of these logs?"

The woman shook her head.

"Is this a refusal?" returned Caroline. "I do not ask it for nothing; I will pay you."

The same response came. In Caroline's speech the mountaineer had understood only the name of Laussonne.

Caroline knew nothing of the dialect of the Cévennes. It had formed no part of the early education she had received from her nurse. The music of Justine's accent, however, had lingered in her memory, and she caught at the bright idea of imitating it, which she succeeded in doing so well that the ears of the peasant woman opened at once. She understood French measured out in this way, and even spoke it herself quite readily.

"Sit down there, behind, on the next log," said she, "and give your bundle to my husband. Come! we ask nothing for this, my daughter."

Caroline thanked her and took a seat upon the log. The peasant made her a stirrup like that which held up the feet of his wife, and the rustic procession went on its way but slightly delayed by the ceremony. The husband, who walked close at hand, made no attempt to talk. The Cévenol is grave, and if he is ever curious, he will not deign to let the fact appear. He contents himself with listening afterward to the comments of the women, who ask infor-

mation boldly; but the logs were long, and Caroline was too far from the female mountaineer to be in danger of any cross-questioning.

She thus passed at no great distance the Red Rock, which she mistook at first for an enormous ruined tower; but she recalled the stories of Justine about this curiosity of her country, and recognized the strange dike, the indestructible volcanic monument, through whose pale shadow cast by the moon she was now journeying.

The narrow, winding road rose above the torrent little by little, growing so contracted that Caroline was frightened to see her feet hanging in space over these awful depths. The wheels cut down into the earth soaked by the rains on the extreme edge of the dizzy slope; but the little oxen never swerved in the least; the driver kept on singing, standing a little way off when he could find no comfortable place near his log, and the nurse had a fashion of swaying back and forth that seemed to mask a vain struggle with sleep.

"Bless me!" cried Caroline to the husband, "have you no fear for your wife and child?"

He understood the gesture, if not the words, and called out to his wife not to drop the little one, then launched forth anew in a dismal air, which resembled a religious chant.

Caroline soon became used to the dizziness; she would not be tempted into turning her back to the precipice, as the peasant motioned for her to do. The country was so fine and so strange, the splendor of the moon made it look so terrible, that she was unwilling to lose anything of the novel spectacle. In the angles of the ascent, when the oxen had turned the fore wheels, and the log still held the hind wheels to their former course until they threatened to go over the brink, the astonished traveller unconsciously stiffened herself up a little on her stirrup of rope. Then the driver would speak to his oxen in a calm and gentle tone, and his voice, which seemed to adapt their docile steps to the least unevenness of the ground, reassured Caroline as if it had been the voice of a mysterious spirit shaping her destiny.

"And yet why should I be afraid?"

she asked herself. "Why should I cling to a life which will be henceforth full of dread? — to a succession of days which in prospect are a hundred times more frightful than death? If I fell into this chasm, I should be instantly crushed. And even if I suffered an hour or two before my death, what would that be compared with the years of sorrow, loneliness, and perhaps despair, which await me?"

We see that Caroline at last had owned to her love and her grief. Their full extent she had not yet measured, and, as she thought about that instinctive love of life which had just made her shudder, bold as she was by nature, she tried to persuade herself that it was a presentiment, — a celestial promise of speedy relief. "Who knows? Perhaps I shall forget sooner than I think. Have I any right to wish for death? Can I even afford to give way to grief, and waste my strength? Can my sister and her children do without me? Do I want them to live on the charity of those who have driven me away? Must I not soon go to work again, and, in order to work, shall I not be obliged to forget everything that is not work?"

And then she was troubled even by her own courage. "What," she said to herself again, — "what if this were only a snare of hope!" Some of M. de Villemer's words came back to her, and certain phrases in his book that showed a wonderful amount of energy, penetration, and perseverance. Would such a man give up a plan he was bent upon, allowing himself to be deceived by stratagem, and would he not have in its highest power that divining sense which is a part of love?

"I have acted to no purpose; he will find me again, if he tries to find me. It is useless for me to have come here, though I am a hundred and fifty leagues off, and though it seems impossible for any one to think of my being here rather than elsewhere; for he will have that gift of second sight, if he loves me with all his strength. So it would be childish to run away and hide, if this were the whole of my defensive resistance. My heart must take up arms against him, and at any moment, no matter when, I must stand ready to

face him, and say to him, 'Suffer in vain or die if need be; I do not love you!'"

As she said this, Caroline was seized by a sudden impulse to lean forward, quit the stirrup, and let herself fall into the abyss. At last, fatigue overcame her excitement; the road, which still led upward, was not so steep, and had turned away from the cleft of the ravine, leaving all danger behind. Their slow progress, the monotonous swaying of the log, and the regular grinding of the yokes against the pole, had a quieting effect upon her. She watched the rocks as they passed slowly before her, under their fantastic lights, and the tree-tops, whose budding leafage resembled transparent clouds. It became quite cold as they rose above the valleys, and the keen air was benumbing. The torrent vanished into the depths, but its strong, fresh voice filled the night with wild harmonies. Caroline felt her eyelids growing heavy. Judging it could not be far from Lantriac, and not wanting to be carried to Laussonne, she jumped to the ground and walked on to rouse herself.

She knew Lantriac was in a mountain gorge and that she would be very near it when she had lost sight of the torrent of the Gâgne. At the end of a half-hour's walk, in fact, she saw the outlines of houses above the rocks, reclaimed her bundle, made the peasant take some money, though not without difficulty, evaded the curiosity of his wife, and stayed behind to let them pass through the village, exposed to the barking of the dogs and disturbing the rest of the villagers whom she hoped to find sound asleep again on her own arrival.

But nothing disturbs the sleep of the dwellers in a Velay hamlet, and nothing awakens their dogs. The procession of timber went along; the teamsters still singing, the wheels rumbling heavily over the blocks of lava which, under pretext of paving the streets, in these inhospitable villages, form a system of defence far more impassably sure than the perilous roads by which you arrive.

Caroline, noticing the deep silence which followed upon the noise of the wheels, ventured resolutely into the

narrow and almost perpendicular street which was supposed to continue the highway. Here her knowledge of the place came to a sudden stop. Justine had never described the position of her house. The traveller, wishing to glide in quietly and arrange with the family to keep her incognito, resolved to avoid knocking anywhere or waking any one, and to wait for day, which could not be long in dawning. She laid her bundle down beside her on a wooden bench, and took her seat under the pent-house of the first cottage she came to. She gazed at the queer fantastic picture made by the roofs, brought into uneven and hard relief against the white clouds of the sky. The moon passed into the narrow zone left open between the neighboring pent-houses. The basin of a little fountain caught the clear moonlight in full, and a quarter of its circle sparkled under the fall of a slender spray of water from the rock. The peaceful aspect and continuous measured sound of this silvery water soon lulled our exhausted traveller to sleep.

"Here is certainly a change within three days," said she to herself, placing her bundle so as to make it a rest for her weary head. "Only last Thursday, nevertheless, Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, in a dress of tulle, her neck and arms loaded with rare pearls, and her hair full of camellias, was dancing with the Marquis de Villemer, under the light of countless tapers, in one of the richest of Parisian drawing-rooms. What would M. de Villemer say now if he could see this pretended queen of the ball-room, wrapped in coarse woollen, lying at the door of a shed, her feet almost in the flowing water and her hands stiff with the cold? Happily the moon is beautiful,—and heré it is striking two o'clock! Well, there is an hour more to be spent here, and since sleep will come whether or no, why, then, let it be welcome."

XXI.

At daybreak Mlle. de Saint-Geneix was awakened by the hens clucking and scratching around her. She rose and walked on, looking at the doors of the

houses as they opened one by one, and saying to herself with reason that in a hamlet so small and stowed so close among the rocks, she could not stray far without finding the face she sought.

But here a difficulty presented itself. Was she sure of recognizing this nurse, whom she had never seen since she was ten years old? She had Justine's voice and accent in her memory far more clearly than her face. She followed the ups and downs of the road as far as the last house behind the rock, and there she saw written on the door "Peyraque Lanion." A horseshoe nailed over this sign indicated his occupation of farrier.

Justine had risen first, as was her custom, while the closed calico curtains of the bed shaded the last nap of M. Peyraque. The principal apartment on this ground-floor showed the comfort of a well-to-do household, and the mark of this easy competence consisted particularly in the garniture of the ceiling, which was trellised with racks of monumental supplies of vegetables and divers rural commodities; but the strict cleanliness, a rare deviation from the customs of the country, removed everything which might offend the eye or the sense of smell.

Justine was lighting her fire, and preparing to make the soup her husband was to find smoking hot on his awakening, when she saw Mlle. de Saint-Geneix come in with her hood on, carrying her bundle. She cast a look of perplexity upon the stranger, and said at last, "What have you to sell?"

Caroline, hearing Peyraque snore behind his curtain, put her finger to her lips and threw her hood back on her shoulders. Justine stood still an instant, suppressed a cry of joy, and opened her stout arms with rapture. She had recognized her child. "Come, come!" said she, leading her toward a little break-neck staircase at the farther end of the entry, "your room is all ready. We have been hoping for you every day this year." And she called to her husband, "Get up, Peyraque, at once, and shut the door. Here is news, O, such good news!"

The little chamber, whitewashed and furnished in rustic fashion, was, like

the lower room, of irreproachable neatness. The view was magnificent; and blossoming fruit-trees came up to the level of the window. "It is a paradise!" exclaimed Caroline to the good woman. "It only needs a little fire, which you are going to make for me. I am cold and hungry, but happy to see you and be with you. I must tell you something, first of all. I don't want it known here who I am. My reasons are good ones, and you shall know them; they will meet your approval. Let us begin by agreeing on our facts; you have lived at Brioude?"

"Yes; I was in service there before I was married."

"Brioude is a long way from here. Is there any one from that country in Lantriac?"

"No one; and strangers never come. There is no road except for ox-carts."

"I saw that myself. Then you can pass me off for some one you knew at Brioude?"

"Very easily, — the daughter of my old mistress."

"No; I'm not to be a young lady."

"But she was not a young lady; she was a little tradeswoman."

"That's it; but I must have an occupation."

"Wait a minute! — that's easy enough. Be a pedler of small wares, like the one I am speaking of."

"But then I shall have to sell something."

"I'll see to that. Besides, you are supposed to have made your rounds, and I shall have detained you here as a matter of friendship; for you are going to stay?"

"A month, at least."

"You must stay always. We will find you something to do, never fear. But, let's see; what shall be your name?"

"Charlette; you called me that when I was a little thing; so it will not give you any trouble. I am supposed to be a widow, and you must say 'thou' to me."

"Just as I used to. Good! it is agreed. But how will you dress, my dear Charlette?"

"Like this. You see it's not luxurious."

"It's not very rich, to be sure; though it will pass; but this lovely blond hair of yours will attract the eye; and a city bonnet will be a wonder."

"I thought of that; so I bought at Brioude one of the head-dresses worn there. I have it in my travelling-bag, and I'm going to don my costume at once for fear of a surprise."

"Then I'll go at once and get you some breakfast. You will eat with Peyraque, I take it?"

"And with you, I hope. To-morrow I mean to help you about the house and in the kitchen."

"O, you may pretend to do that! I don't want you to spoil those little hands I used to take such care of. Now I'm going to see if Peyraque is up, and let him know what has been agreed upon; then you must tell us why there is need of all this mystery."

While talking, Justine had kindled the wood already in the fireplace. She had filled the pitchers with pure cold water, which had trickled from the rock, coming through an earthen pipe to the toilet-table of her little chamber, and then down into the kitchen sink. This was an invention of Peyraque's, who prided himself on having ideas of his own.

Half an hour afterward Caroline, whose simple attire marked no particular station, put up her fine hair under the little head-dress from Brioude, less scantily contrived, and more prettily curved than the round dish-cover — which, like it, is of black felt trimmed with velvet — worn by the women of Velay. It was all in vain; she was still charming in spite of the weariness that dimmed the large eyes "green like the sea," formerly so bepraised by the Marchioness.

The soup of rice and potatoes was quickly served in a small room where Peyraque at odd moments did a little carpenter-work. The good man thought this an unsuitable reception, and wanted to sweep away the shavings. "On the contrary," said his wife, spreading the chips and sawdust over the floor, "you don't understand at all! She will think it a pretty carpet. O you don't know her yet! She is a daughter of the good Providence, this one is!"

¹ Caroline made acquaintance with

Peyraque by embracing him. He was a man of about sixty years, still very robust though thin, of medium height, and plain-featured, like most of the mountaineers in this region; but that his austere and even stern countenance bore the stamp of integrity was evident at the first glance. His rare smile was remarkably genial. You saw in it real affection and sincerity, which were all the more unmistakable from the fact that they were never lavished demonstratively.

Justine also had rigid features, and a blunt way of speaking. She was a strong generous character. An earnest Roman Catholic, she respected the silence of her husband who was of Protestant descent, nominally converted indeed, but a free-thinker if there ever was one. Caroline knew these circumstances and was touched to see the delicate respect which this superior woman knew how to weave into her love for her husband. It must be remembered that Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, the daughter of a very weak man, and the sister of an inefficient woman, owed the great courage she possessed first to her mother, who was of Cévenol parentage, and afterward to the ideas Justine had given her in early life. She perceived this very clearly when she found herself seated between this old couple whose precise language and notions caused her neither fear nor surprise. It seemed as if the milk of her mountain nurse had passed into her whole being, and as if she were there in the presence of types with which she had already been made familiar in some previous existence.

"My friends," said she, when Justine had brought her the cream of the desert, while Peyraque washed down his soup with a draught of hot wine, followed up before long with a draught of black coffee, "I promised to tell you my story and here it is in few words. One of the sons of my old lady had some idea of marrying me."

"Ah, indeed! that might well be," said Justine.

"You are right, because our characters and ideas are alike. Any one ought to have foreseen that, and I myself first of all."

"And the mother, too!" said Peyraque.

"Well, no one seems to have thought of it; and the son surprised and even angered the mother when he told her he loved me."

"And you?" asked Justine.

"I — I — why he never told me of it at all; and, as I knew I was not noble enough or wealthy enough for him, I should never have allowed him to think of it."

"Yes, that's right!" returned Peyraque.

"And it's true!" added Justine.

"Then I saw I could not stay a day longer, and at the first angry word from the mother I went away without seeing the son again; but the son would have hurried after me if I had remained with my sister. The Marchioness wanted me to stay a little to have an explanation with him, to tell him I did not love him —"

"That is what ought to have been done, perhaps," said Peyraque.

Caroline was forcibly impressed by the austere logic of the peasant. "Yes, unquestionably," thought she, "my courage ought to have been pushed thus far."

And, as she still kept silence, the nurse, enlightened by the penetration of a loving heart, said to her husband, sharply, "Stop talking there, you! How you run on! How do you know she did n't love him, this poor child?"

"Ah! that, that is another thing," replied Peyraque, bowing his serious, thoughtful head, which now looked nobler for the sense of delicate pity expressed upon his face.

Caroline was touched in an unspeakable degree by the straightforwardness of this simple friendship, which with one word touched the sorest spot in her wound. What she had not had strength or confidence to tell her sister, she was impelled not to disguise from these hearts, so thoroughly true and so able to read her own. "Well, my friends, you are right," said she, taking their hands. "I should not perhaps have been able to lie to you, for, in spite of myself, I — I do love him!"

Hardly had she spoken the words, when she was seized with terror, and

looked around as if Urbain might have been there to hear them ; then she burst into tears at the thought that he never would hear them.

"Courage, my daughter, the Lord will aid you," exclaimed Peyraque, rising.

"And we will aid you, too," said Justine, embracing her. "We will hide you, we will love you, we will pray for you !"

She led her back to her room, undressed her, and made her lie down, with motherly care that she should be warm and not see the sun shining in too early on her bed. Then she went down to apprise her neighbors of the arrival from Brioude of a person named Charlette, to answer all their questions, mentioning her paleness and her beauty that these might not strike them too forcibly. She took pains to tell them also that the speech of Brioude was not at all like that of the mountains, so Charlette would be unable to talk with them. "Ah ! the poor creature," replied the gossips. "She will find it very dull and tiresome with us !"

A week later, after having informed her sister, in the proper time and place, of her safe arrival, Caroline gave her some detailed account of her new mode of life. It must not be forgotten that, hiding her actual sorrow, she was trying to reassure her sister, and to divert her own thoughts by affecting an independence far from being so complete or so real as it seemed.

"You can form no idea of the care they take of me, these Peyraques. Justine is always the same noble woman, with a heart like an angel's, whom you know, and whom our father could not bear to see going away from us. So it is saying more than a little to declare that her husband is worthy of her. He has even more intelligence, although he is slower of comprehension ; but what he does understand is as if engraved on marble without spot or blemish. I assure you I am not weary a single moment with them. I could be alone much more than I am, for my little room is free from all intrusion of servants, and I can dream without being disturbed ; but I rarely feel the need of this : I am contented among these wor-

thy people, I am conscious of being loved.

"They have, besides, something of intellectual life, like most of the people here. They inquire about things in the world without ; and it is astonishing to find in a kind of blind alley, among such wild mountains, a peasantry with so many notions foreign to their own necessities and habits. Their children, their neighbors, and their friends impress me as active, intelligent, and honest, while Peyraque tells me it is the same in villages farther still from all civilization.

"As an offset to this, the dwellers in the little groups of cottages scattered over the mountain, those who are only peasants, shepherds, or laborers, live in an apathy beyond all comprehension. The other day I asked a woman the name of a river which formed a magnificent cascade not more than a hundred paces from her house. 'That is water,' she replied. 'But the water has a name, hasn't it?' 'I will ask my husband ; I don't know myself ; we women always call all the rivers water.'

"The husband knew enough to tell me the names of the torrent and the cascade ; but when I asked for those of the mountains on the horizon, he said he knew nothing about them, he had never been there. 'But you must have heard that those are the Cévennes?'

"Perhaps so ! The Mezenc and the Gerbier de Joncs [sheaf or stack of reeds] are over there, but I don't know which they are.'

"I pointed them out to him ; they are easily recognized, — Mezenc, the loftiest of the peaks, and the Gerbier, an elegant cone, which holds in its crater reeds and swamp-grasses. Only, the good man would not even look. It was all precisely the same to him. He showed me the 'grottos of the ancient savages,' that is, a kind of Gallic or Celtic village hollowed out of the rock, with the same precautions that beasts of the wilderness use to conceal their dens ; for you can examine this rock and follow it without discovering anything unusual unless you know the path which penetrates this labyrinth and its habitations. Ah, my dear Camille, am I not here a little like those

'ancient savages,' who, for fear of intrusion, hid themselves in caves and sought their peace in forgetfulness of the whole world?

"At all events, the inhabitants of La Roche impress me as being the direct descendants of those poor Celts, hidden in their rock, and, as it were, bound to it. I looked at the woman, with bare legs and dull eyes, who conducted us into the grottos, and asked myself whether three or four thousand years had really passed away since her ancestors took root in these stones.

"You see I go out, for prudence does not require the in-door life, which you feared for me. On the contrary, having nothing to read here, I feel the need of strolling about, and my movements surprise the good people of Lantriac much less than a mysterious retreat would do. I run no risk of meeting strangers. You saw me set out in clothing that would not attract attention in the least. Besides, I have a black felt hat, larger than those worn here, which shades my face quite nicely. In case of need, too, I can conceal it entirely under the brown hood I brought with me, which the capricious weather gives me an excuse for wearing in my walks. I am not just like the women of the country; but there is nothing in my appearance to create a sensation in the places where I go.

"Then, too, I have a pretext for going out, which accounts for everything. Justine has a little trade in small wares and gives me charge of a box whose contents I offer for sale, while Peyraque, who is a farrier, busies himself with visiting sick animals. This enables me to go into the houses and observe the manners and customs of the country. I sell but little, for the women are so absorbed in their lace-making that they never mend for their husbands, their children, or themselves. Here is the triumph of rags worn with pride. Their devotion to their one occupation is so passionate as to exclude all material well-being and all cleanliness even, as a profane superfluity. Avarice finds its account in this, and vanity also, for if Justine gave me jewelry to sell I should soon have customers more eager for that than for linen and shoes.

"They produce all those marvellous black and white laces, which you have seen Justine make at our house. It is wonderful to see, here among the mountains, this fairy-like work coming from the hands of these poor creatures, and the trifling sum they realize shocks the traveller. They would cheerfully give you for twenty sous what they ask twenty francs for in Paris, if they were allowed to trade with the consumer; but this is strictly forbidden. Under the pretext of having furnished silk, thread, and patterns, the dealer monopolizes and sets a price on their work. In vain you offer to supply the peasant-woman with materials and pay her well. The poor woman sighs, looks at the money, shakes her head, and replies that she will not risk losing the patronage of 'her master' in order to profit by the liberality of a person who will not employ her permanently, and whom she may possibly never see again. And then all these women are pious, or pretend to be so. Those who are sincere have sworn by the Virgin and the saints not to sell to individuals, and one is forced to honor their respect for a promise given. Those who make religion a regular profession (and I see there are more such than one would suppose) are conscious of being always under the hand and beneath the eye of the priests, nuns, monks, and seminarists, with whom this country is literally sown and covered even in the most uninhabitable places. The convents have the work done; and here, as elsewhere, under conditions of trade still more lucrative than those of the dealers. You can see, in the vestibules of the churches even, the women from the village in a sort of community, sitting in a circle, making their bobbins fly as they murmur litanies or chant offices in Latin; which does not, however, prevent them from gazing curiously at the passers-by and exchanging remarks, while they reply *ora pro nobis* to the gray, black, or blue sister who oversees the work and the psalmody.

"These women are generally kind and hospitable. Their children interest me, and when I find those who are ill, I am glad to be able to point out the more simple attentions that should

be given them. There is either great ignorance or great indifference on this point. Maternity here is rather passionate than tender. It is as if they told you that children are created for the single purpose of learning how to suffer.

"Peyraque's business, as his services are much in demand, leads us into some almost inaccessible places on the mountain, giving me a chance to see the finest landscapes in the world, for this wonderful country is like a dream, — and my own life is a strange dream also, is it not ?

"Our fashion of going in search of adventures is quite primitive. Peyraque has a little cart, which he is pleased to denominate a carriage, because it has an awning of canvas, which somewhat ambitiously pretends to shelter us. He harnesses to this vehicle now an intrepid little mule, and now a pony, spirited but gentle, all skin and bone like its owner, but like him, too, never flinching at anything. So, while Justine's eldest son, just returned from the regiment, where he has been shoeing artillery horses, continues his trade under the paternal roof, his father and I wander over hill and vale without regard to the weather. Justine pretends this does me so much good that I must stay with her 'always,' and vows she will find some way for me to earn our livelihood without humiliating myself to serve any great lady.

"Alas ! I never felt humiliated so long as I knew I was loved ; and then I loved so sincerely in return ! Do you know it saddens me no longer to receive a blessing every morning from that poor old Marchioness, and not only so, but I am quite uneasy, alarmed about her even, as if I felt she could not live without me ! God grant she may soon forget me, that my place may already have been filled by one less fatal than I to her peace. But will she be cared for, morally speaking, as I cared for her ? Will her fanciful whims be understood, the dulness of her leisure hours charmed away, or her children spoken of as she loves to hear them spoken of ? On my arrival here, I drank in the free air with long breaths ; I gazed at this grand, rugged scenery which I had felt so

strong a wish to know. I said to myself, 'Here I am then free ! I shall go where I please ; I will talk as little as I please ; I shall no longer write the same letter ten times a day to ten different people ; I shall not live in a hot-house ; I shall not breathe the sharp perfumes of flowers distilled by chemical processes, or of plants half dead on the windowsills ; I shall drink from the breeze hawthorn and wild thyme in their real fragrance.' Yes, I said all this to myself, and I could not rejoice. I saw my poor friend sad and lonely, perhaps weeping for having made me weep so much !

"But she chose this, and to all appearance, it was necessary. I have no right to blame her for a moment of unjust anger. The mother thought only of her son, and such a son well deserves all a mother's sacrifice. Perhaps she calls me hard and ungrateful for not falling in with her plans, and I often ask myself if I ought not to have fallen in with them ; but I always answer that the end would not have been attained. The Marquis de V—— is not one of those men who can be sent off with a few commonplaces of cool disdain. Besides, you have no right to act thus toward one who, far from declaring his passion, has surrounded you with respect and delicate affection. In vain I seek some language, half cold, half tender, which I might have used in telling him that I hold his mother's happiness and his own equally sacred : I do not find in myself the requisite tact or skill. Either the real friendship I have for him would have deceived him as to my feelings, leading him to think I was sacrificing myself to a sense of duty, or my firmness would have offended him, as if I were parading a virtue whose aid he has never given me occasion to invoke. No, no ! it could not be, it ought not to be.

"I have an impression that the Marchioness hinted that I might tell him I had an engagement, another love. For Heaven's sake, let her invent all she will now ! Let her sacrifice my life and that which I hold still more sacred, if need be. I have left the field clear : but, for my own part, I could never have improvised a romance for the occa-

sion. And would he have been duped by it?

"Camille, you will see him, you have doubtless already seen him again since that first visit, when you admitted it was hard for you to play your part. You say it made you very unhappy to see him; he was almost distracted — He is certainly calm now. He has so much moral strength, he will understand so well that I must never see him again? However, be on your guard! He is very keen. Tell him my nature is a cold one — no, not that; he would n't believe it. But speak of my invincible pride. That is true; yes, I am proud, I feel it! And if I were not, should I deserve his affection?"

"Perhaps it would have been liked if I had become really unworthy of his regard, — not the mother; not she! no, never! She is too upright, too pious, too pure in heart; but the Duke, I mean. Now, I can recall a number of things which I did not understand, and they appear in a new light. The Duke is excellent; he worships his brother. I believe his wife, who is an angel, will purify his life and thoughts; but at Séval, when he told me to save his brother at any cost, — I think of it now, and I blush to think of it!"

"Ah, that I might be allowed to disappear, that I might be allowed to forget all! For a year I believed myself calm, worthy, happy. One day, one hour has spoiled the whole. With one word, Madame de Villemer has poisoned all the memories I had hoped to carry away unsoiled, — memories which now I dare not dwell upon. In truth, Camille, you were right in saying, as you sometimes did, that one should not be too ingenuous, that I ventured out into life too quixotically. This will serve me as a lesson, and I will renounce friendship as well as love. I ask myself why I should not from this time onward break off all relations with a world so full of dangers and snares, why I should not accept my misery more bravely indeed than I have done. I could create some resources in this province even, remote as it is in point of civilization. I could not be a school-mistress, as Justine imagined last year; the clergy have usurped everything

here, and the good sisters would not let me teach, even in Lantriac; but in a city I could find pupils, or I could become a book-keeper in some mercantile house.

"First of all, I must make sure of being forgotten there; but when this oblivion is complete, I must indeed take thought for our children, and I dwell upon this a little in advance. After all, be at ease. I will find something. I shall manage to conquer the malicious fates. I do not sleep, I cannot falter; you know this perfectly. You have enough to live on for two months more, and I need absolutely nothing here. Do not worry, let us always trust the good God, as you, for your part, must trust the sister who loves you."

XXII.

CAROLINE had reason to be alarmed by the inquiries M. de Villemer was making at her sister's. He had already returned twice to Étampes, and, fully aware that delicacy forbade anything like a system of cross-questioning, he confined himself to watching the demeanor of Camille, and drawing his own inferences from her silent evasions. Thenceforth he might take it for granted that Madame Heudebert knew her sister's hiding-place and that Caroline's disappearance gave her no real uneasiness. Camille held in reserve the letter which said Caroline had found employment away from France, and did not produce it. She saw such anguish and distress in the features of the Marquis, which were already much changed, that she dared not inflict this last blow on the benefactor, the protector of her children. Besides Madame Heudebert did not share all Caroline's scruples or comprehend all her pride. She had not ventured to blame her, in this regard; but she herself would not have held it so great a crime to brave the displeasure of the Marchioness a little, and become her daughter-in-law notwithstanding. "Since the intentions of the Marquis were so serious," thought she, "and his mother loves him so that she dares not oppose him openly, and, finally, since

he is of age and master of his own fortune, I don't see why Caroline could not have used her influence over the old lady, her powers of persuasion, and the evidence of her own worth, and so led her gently to admit the propriety of the marriage. — There! poor Caroline, with all her valiant devotedness, is too romantic, and will go away and kill herself in order to support us; while, with a little patient tact, she might be happy and make us all happy too."

Here is another common-sense opinion which may be set over against that of Peyraque and Justine. Of these two lines of reasoning the reader is free to adopt the one that he prefers; but the narrator must, of necessity, hold an opinion also, and he avows a little partiality for that of Caroline.

The Marquis perceived that Madame Heudebert made, now and then, some timid allusions to the state of things, and felt sure she knew the whole. He threw himself on her mercy a little more than he had done hitherto; and Camille, encouraged, asked him, with a sufficient want of tact, whether, in case the Marchioness proved inexorable, he was fully resolved to make Caroline an offer of his hand. She seemed on the point of betraying her sister's secret, if the Marquis would pledge his word of honor.

The Marquis replied without hesitation: "If I was sure of being loved, if the happiness of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix depended on my courage, I would contrive to do away with my mother's prejudices, at any cost; but you give me no encouragement. Only give me that, and you will see!"

"I give you encouragement!" exclaimed Camille, amazed and confused. She hesitated to reply. She had indeed divined Caroline's secret; but the latter had always guarded it proudly, not by falsehood, but by never allowing herself to be questioned, and Madame Heudebert had not the daring to inflict a severe wound on her sister's dignity, by taking it upon herself to compromise her. "That is something I am no wiser about than you," said she. "Caroline has a strong character, — one which I cannot always fathom."

"And this strength of hers is so

great," said the Marquis, "that she would never accept my name without my mother's sincere benediction. This I know better even than you do. So tell me nothing; it is for me alone to act. I ask of you only one thing more, and that is to let me watch over you and your children until something new shall occur, and even — yes, I will venture to say it — I am haunted by the fear that Mlle. de Saint-Geneix may find herself without resources, exposed to privations which it makes me shudder to think of. Spare me this dread. Let me leave you a sum which you can return, if there is no use for it, but which, in case of need, you will remit to her as coming from yourself."

"O, that is quite impossible," replied Camille: "she would divine the source, and never forgive me for having taken it!"

"I see you are really afraid of her."

"Just as I am of all that commands respect."

"Then we feel alike," replied the Marquis as he took leave. "I am so thoroughly afraid of her that I dare not seek her any farther, and yet I must find her again or die."

Shortly afterward the Marquis drew an explanation from his mother, which was painful enough to both of them. Although he saw her suffering, sad, regretting Caroline a hundred times more than she admitted, and although he had resolved to await a more propitious moment for his inquiries, the explanation came, in his own despite and in despite of the Marchioness, through the fatality of circumstances. The anxiety of the situation was too intense; it could not be prolonged. Madame de Villemer confessed that she had conceived a sudden prejudice against the character of Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, and that at the very moment of fulfilling her promise she had let Caroline feel the exceeding pain it caused her. Gradually, under the eager questioning of the Marquis, the conversation grew more animated, and Madame de Villemer, pushed to extremity, allowed the accusation against Caroline to escape her. The unfortunate girl had committed a fault pardonable in the eyes of the Marchioness when acting as her

friend and guardian, but one which made it quite out of the question even to think of receiving her as a daughter.

Before this result of calumny the Marquis did not flinch one instant. "It is an infamous lie," he cried, beside himself, — "a base lie! And you could believe it? Then it must have been very artful and very audacious. Mother, you must tell me all, for I am not disposed to be taken in so myself."

"No, my son, I shall tell you no more," replied Madame de Villemer firmly; "and every word you add to those you have just uttered, I shall consider a breach of filial affection and respect."

So the Marchioness remained impenetrable; she had promised not to betray Léonie; and, besides, nothing in the world would tempt her to sow the seeds of discord between her two sons. The Duke had so often told her, in Urbain's presence, that he had never sought or obtained a single kind look from Caroline! This, in the opinion of the Marchioness, was a falsehood the Marquis would never pardon. She knew, now, that he had taken the Duke into his confidence, and that Gaëtan, touched by his grief, had persuaded his wife into taking measures for seeking Caroline in all the Parisian convents. "He does not speak," said the Marchioness to herself; "he will not dissuade his wife and brother from this folly, when he ought, at the very least, to have confessed the past to the Marquis, in order to cure him of it. It is too late now to risk such avowals. I cannot do it without leading my two sons to kill each other after having loved so warmly."

Meanwhile Caroline wrote her sister as follows: —

"You feel alarmed because I am in so uneven and rocky a region, and ask what can be fine enough to make one run the risk of being killed at every step. First of all, there is really no danger here for me under the guidance of this good Peyraque. The roads, that would be actually frightful, and, as I think, impassable for carriages like those with which we are familiar, are just large enough for the little carts of this region. Then, too, Peyraque is very prudent. When he cannot measure

with his eye just precisely the space he needs, he has a method of ascertaining it, which made me laugh heartily the first time I saw him put it in practice. He trusts me with the reins, jumps to the ground himself, takes his whip, which has the exact size of his cart marked with a little notch on its stock, and, advancing a few paces on the road, he proceeds to measure the width of the passage between the rock and the precipice, — sometimes between one precipice on the right and another on the left. If the road has a centimetre more than is needful he comes back triumphant, and we go quickly by. If we have no such centimetre in which to disport ourselves, he makes me alight, while he leads the horse by the bridle, dragging on the carriage. When we find two little walls hemming in a foot-path, we place one wheel on either wall and the horse in the pathway. I assure you one soon becomes accustomed to all this, and already I think no more about it. The horses here have no vicious tricks, and are not inclined to shy; they know the danger as well as we, and accidents are no more frequent in this country than they are on the plains. I certainly exaggerated the danger of these jaunts in my first letters; it was from vanity, or a lingering fear, of which I am wholly cured now that I feel it was groundless.

"As to the beauty of Velay, I could never describe it for you. I did not dream there could be, here in the heart of France, a country so strange and so imposing. It is far more lovely than Auvergne, through which I passed on my way hither. The city of Le Puy is probably unique in point of location; it is perched upon masses of lava that seem to spring up from its very heart and form a part of its architecture. These lava pyramids are indeed the edifices of giants; but those which man has placed on their sides, and often on their summits, have certainly been inspired by the grandeur and wildness of the spot.

"The cathedral is admirable, in the Romanesque style, of the same color as the rocks, but slightly enlivened by the blue and white mosaics on the pediments of its façade. It is placed so as to seem colossal, for, to reach it, you

must climb a mountain of dizzy steps. The interior is sublime in its elegant strength and solemn dimness. I never understood the terrors of the Middle Ages, or felt them, so to speak, as I did under these bare, black pillars, beneath these storm-laden domes. There was a furious tempest while I was there. The flashes sent their infernal lights across the splendid windows that strew the walls and pavements with jewels. The thunders seemed rolling forth from the sanctuary itself. It was Jehovah in all his wrath; but it gave me no alarm. The true God, whom we love to-day, has no menaces for the weak. I prayed there with a perfect faith, and felt it had done me good. As for these beautiful temples of the faith in ages both rude and stern, it is clear they are the expression of the one grand word, "mystery," whose veil it was forbidden to lift. If M. de Villemer had been there he would have said —

"But a course of history and religious philosophy is not to the point now. The ideas of M. de Villemer are no longer the book from which I may study the past or learn to anticipate the future.

"You see, thanks to good Peyraque and his desire to show me the marvels of Velay, thanks also to my impenetrable hood, I have ventured into the city and its suburbs. The city is everywhere picturesque; it is still a mediæval town, closely studded with churches and convents. The cathedral is flanked by a whole world of ancient structures, where, under mysterious arcades, and in the turns and twists of the rock they stand on, you can see cloisters, gardens, staircases, and mute shadows gliding by, hidden beneath veil and cassock. A strange silence reigns there, and a certain odor of the past, I know not what, which makes one shiver with fear, not of our God, the source of all confidence and spiritual freedom, but of everything that, in the name of God, breaks up forever the ties and duties of our common humanity. In our convent, I remember a religious life seemed cheerful; here, it is sombre enough to make one tremble.

"From the cathedral you must keep going down hill for an hour to reach the Faubourg d'Aiguilhe, where another

monument rears its head, which is natural and historic, at one and the same time, and, indeed, the most curious thing in the world. It is a volcanic sugar-loaf three hundred feet in height, which you mount by a spiral stairway until you reach a Byzantine chapel, necessarily quite small, but charming, and built, it is said, on the site and from the fragments of a temple to Diana.

"A legend is current here, which struck me forcibly. A young girl, a Christian virgin, pursued by some miscreant, flung herself to escape him down from the top of the terrace; she arose at once; she was unharmed. The miracle was noised abroad. She was declared a saint. Pride grew strong in her heart; she promised to hurl herself down again, to show she was under the protection of angels; but this time Heaven deserted her, and she was crushed like a vain silly creature as she was.

"Pride! yes, God leaves the proud to themselves, and without him what can they do? But do not tell me that I am proud. No, it is not pride. I have no desire to prove anything to any one. I ask to be forgotten, and that there should be no suffering on my account.

"There is near Le Puy, forming a part of its magnificent landscape, a village that also crowns one of those singular, isolated rocks, which break through the soil here at every step. It is called Espaly, and this rock also bears up the ruins of a feudal castle and of Celtic grottoes. One of these caves is inhabited by two persons, aged and poor, whose squalid misery is heart-rending. This couple live here in the solid rock, with a single hole for chimney and window. At night they block up the door, in winter with straw; in summer, with the old woman's petticoat. A small, rude bed without coverlids or mattress, two stools, a little iron lamp, a spinning-wheel, and two or three earthen pots, — these are all the furniture.

"Nevertheless, only a few paces from them there is a vast and splendid house belonging to the Jesuits and named the Paradise. At the foot of the rock flows a brook which brings down precious stones in its sand. The old woman sold

me for twenty sous a handful of garnets, sapphires, and jacinths, which I am keeping for Lili. The stones are too small to have any actual value, but there must be a precious deposit somewhere among these rocks. The Jesuit fathers will find it, perhaps; I don't expect to make the discovery myself, however; so I must think about procuring some work. Peyraque has an idea which he has enlarged upon for the last few days, and which was suggested to him by this very rock of Espaly; I will tell you how.

"While strolling about over this rock, I was taken with one of my sudden fancies for a little child, playing in the lap of a pretty woman from the village, who was strong and cheerful. This child, you see, I can compare with no one but our Charley, for inspiring affection. He does not look like Charley, but has the same demure playfulness, and the shy caresses which make one his willing slave. When I called upon Peyraque to admire him, remarking how clean he was kept, and that his mother made no lace, but seemed wholly taken up with him, as if she knew she had a treasure there, Peyraque at once replied, 'You have come nearer the truth than you thought. This child is a treasure for Dame Roqueberte. If you ask who he is, she will tell you it is the child of a sister she has in Clermont; but this is not true: the little one has been placed in her charge by a gentleman whom no one knows, who pays her for rearing it, who pays her, besides, for taking great care of it, as if it were the son of a prince. So you see this woman is well dressed and does not work. She was in easy circumstances before. Her husband has charge of the castle of Polignac, whose great tower, and in fact all the ruined portion, you can see over yonder, on a rock larger and loftier than that of Espaly; that is where she lives, and, if you meet her here, it is because now she has such fine chances for pleasure strolls. The real mother of the little one must be dead, for she has never been heard of; but the father comes to see it, leaves money, and stipulates that it shall not be allowed to want for anything.'

"You see, dear sister, this is a ro-

mance. That is partly what attracted me perhaps, since, according to your ideas, I am quite romantic. Certainly this little boy has something about him which captivates the imagination. He is not strong; they say when he first came here he had hardly life enough to breathe; but now he is quite blooming, and the mountain air agrees with him so well that his father, who came here at about this time last year to take him away, decided to leave him a year longer, in order to have him regain his strength completely. The little creature has an angelic face, dreamy eyes, with a far-off look in them, strange in a child of his age, and there is a wondrous grace in all his ways.

"Peyraque, seeing me so bewitched, scratched his head with an air of profundity and continued, 'Well, tell me, then, since you are fond of little children, why, instead of making it your occupation to read aloud, which must be wearisome, do you not find a little pupil like that, whom you could educate at your sister's with the other children? This would leave you in your own home and to your own ways.'

"'You forget, my good Peyraque, that perhaps it will be long before I can go to my sister.'

"'Well, then, your sister might come and live here, or else you could stay with us for a year or two; my wife would aid you in taking care of the child, and you would only have the trouble of watching over him and teaching him. — Stop! I have an idea of my own about this child, since he pleases you so that you are doting on him already. His father will come after him one of these days. Suppose I should tell him about you?'

"'Then you are acquainted with him?'

"'I acted as driver for him once, and carried him to the mountain in my carriage. He seems a fine man, but too young to take upon himself the bringing up of a child of three years. He will have to place it in charge of some woman, and he cannot leave it any longer with the Roqueberts, for they are not capable of teaching what a young gentleman like him ought to know. This would be your own task, especially, and the father would never

find so good a mother for his child. Hope, hope! (which signifies wait!) I will keep watch at Polignac, and as soon as this father arrives, I will manage to talk with him in the proper way.'

"I let good Peyraque cultivate this project, and Justine also, but I have no faith in it myself, for the mysterious personage expected will ask questions I am unwilling to have answered, unless I am quite sure he knows none of the people, either intimately or remotely, from whom my place of retreat must be concealed. And how could I make sure of that? Peyraque's idea is, nevertheless, in itself a good one. To educate some child at home for a few years would please me infinitely better than going into a strange family again. I would rather take a girl than a boy, as she would be left with me a longer time; but there will be little room for choice, for these children hidden away by their parents are not easy to find. And there must needs be the most perfect confidence in me. I must be well recommended. Madame d'Arglade, who knows all the secrets of fashionable life, could find for me a chance like this; but I would rather not apply to her: without intending to do so, she might bring upon me some fresh misfortune."

XXIII.

A FEW days later Caroline wrote again to her sister.

"POLIGNAC, May 15.

"Here I have been for five days past, in one of the most imposing ruined castles left from feudal times, on the summit of a great, black lava boulder, like those I told you about in connection with Le Puy and Espaly. You will think my position has changed, and my dream has become reality. No: I am certainly near little Didier, but I have taken it upon myself to watch over him, for his father or protector has not yet appeared. Now see what has happened.

"I felt a wish to see the child again, besides a slight wish to learn more about him; and lastly I had a desire to examine closely this castle of Polignac, which looks from afar like a city of

giants, on a rock from the infernal depths. It is the strongest mediæval fortress in the country; it was the nest of that terrible race of vultures under whose ravages Velay, Forez, and Auvergne have trembled. The ancient lords of Polignac have left everywhere throughout these provinces mementos and traditions worthy of the legends about the ogre and Blue-Beard. These feudal tyrants robbed travellers, pillaged churches, murdered the monks, carried off women, set fire to villages, and this, too, from father to son, through long centuries. The Marquis de Villemer worked out of these facts one of the most remarkable chapters of his book; drawing the conclusion that the descendants of this family though innocent, assuredly, of the crimes of their ancestors, seem, by their misfortunes, to have been expiating the triumphs of barbarism.

"Their citadel was impregnable. The rock is sliced down perpendicularly on all sides. The village forms a group below on the little hill which supports the block of lava. It is some distance from Lantriac. The insuperable ravines here make all distances great. Having started early, however, we arrived last Tuesday toward noon, and our little horse carried us to the foot of the postern. Peyraque left me there, in order to take care of our animal, and to look at some others, for he has quite a reputation in veterinary science, and wherever he goes, practice of this kind always comes to him.

"I found a little girl ten years of age to open the door for me; but when I asked to see Dame Roqueberte, the child told me with tears that her mother was dying. I hurried to where she lives, — a part of the castle still standing, in good repair, — and I found her the victim of a brain-fever. Little Didier was playing about the room with another of this poor woman's children; the latter child was quite happy, comprehending nothing, although the elder; while Didier, between smiles and tears, was looking toward the bedside with as much anxiety as a little creature of three years could be expected to show. When he caught sight of me, he came to me at once, and without coquetting

before embracing me, as he did the first time, he clung to my dress, pulling me with his little hands, and saying 'mamma,' in a voice so plaintive and gentle that my whole heart was won by it. He was certainly telling me about the strange condition of his adopted mother. I drew near the bed. Dame Roqueberte could not speak; she knew no one. Her husband came in after a moment and began to be alarmed, for she had been in this state only a few hours. I told him it was time to send for a physician and a woman to take care of his wife, which he did at once; and as I could not be sure that it was not typhoid fever, I sent the children out of the room, warning the husband that it might be dangerous to leave them there.

"When the physician came at the expiration of two hours, he approved what I had done, observing that the disease had not yet defined itself and that the children must be placed in some other house. This change I undertook to make with the help of Peyraque, for the husband had quite lost his senses, and thought of nothing but having candles burnt in the village church and prayers mumbled in Latin which he could not understand, but which seemed to him of more efficacy than the doctor's prescriptions.

"When he had calmed down a little it was already four o'clock; and it was necessary for Peyraque to set out again with me, that the night might not overtake us in the ravine of the Gâgne. There was no moon for the moment, and a storm was impending. Then poor Roquebert began to lament, saying that he was ruined unless some one would take care of the children, and especially of 'the child,' meaning by that Didier, — the hen with the golden eggs for his household. Special care was needful for him; he was not strong like the children of the country, and besides he was 'curious,' he wanted to go everywhere, and these ruins are a labyrinth of precipices, where a young gentleman of this adventurous temper must not be lost sight of a single moment. He dared not trust him with any one. The money this little one had brought into his house had made others envious, he had enemies; what did I know about

it? In short, Peyraque said to me in a low voice, 'Come, your good heart and my own bright ideas are at one in this matter. Remain here; I see they have the wherewith to lodge you comfortably; I will come back to-morrow to see how the case stands, and take you home if there is no further need of you.'

"I confess I desired this decision; it seemed as if it were a duty as well as a privilege to watch over the child. Peyraque returned the next day, and as I saw that Dame Roqueberte, though out of danger, would not be able to sit up for some days, I consented to remain, telling Peyraque not to come after me till the end of the week.

"I am very comfortable here, in a vast room, which is, I believe, an old hall for the guards, that has been divided into several portions for the use of the farmers. The beds, though very rustic, are clean, and the housekeeping I attend to myself. I have the three children at my side all the time. The little girl does the cooking while I superintend; I see to the attendance which must be given the mother; I wash and dress Didier myself. He is clothed like the others, in a little blue blouse, but with more care, especially since I have made it my concern, — and I am so fond of him that I dread the moment when I shall have to leave him. You know my passion for children, — that is, for some children; this one is certainly well born. Charley would be as jealous of him as a tiger. Because, you see, this Didier is surely the son of a superior man or woman. He is of high, fine descent, morally speaking; his face is of a somewhat dull whiteness with little flushes of color like those on standard roses. He has brown eyes of admirable shape and expression, and a forest of black hair, half inclined to curl, which is fine and soft as silk. His little hands are perfect, and he never soils them. He does not dig in the earth, and never touches anything: he passes his life in looking at things. I am sure he has thoughts beyond his years which he cannot express, or rather, a series of dreams, charming and divine, that cannot be translated into human language; yet he talks very fluently for one of his age,

both in French and patois. He has caught the accent of the country, but makes it very sweet by his infantile lisp. He has the prettiest reasons in the world for doing as he pleases, and what he pleases is to be out of doors, climbing over the ruins, or crawling into their crevices; once there, he sits down, gazing at the tiny flowers, and especially at the insects, without touching them, but following all their motions, apparently interested in these living marvels, while the other children think only of crushing and destroying them.

"I have tried to give him his first notions in reading, being persuaded (contrary to the father's opinion perhaps) that the earlier you begin with children the more you spare them the heavy strain on the attention, so painful when their strength and activity have found greater development. I have tested his intelligence and curiosity; they are unusual, and with our wonderful method, which succeeded so well with your children, I am sure I could teach him to read in a month.

"And then this child is all soul, and his self-will melts into boundless affection. Our fondness is growing too fast really, and I ask myself how we are ever going to part.

"Besides, although I miss my Justine and Peyraque, I enjoy myself exceedingly among these magnificent ruins, commanding as they do one of the loveliest spots on earth. The air is so pure that the white stones, mixed with rough fragments of lava, are as bright as if just from a quarry. And then the interior of this immense castle is stored with very curious things.

"You must know that the Polignac family pretend to a descent from Apollo or his priests in a direct line; and that tradition consecrates the existence here of a temple to this god, — a temple of which some fragments yet remain. As for myself, I think there is no doubt of it, and that just to see these fragments is enough. The question to decide is whether the inscriptions and carvings were brought here to decorate the castle according to Renaissance usage, or whether the castle was built upon these vestiges. Dame Roqueberte tells me

the scientific men of the country have been disputing over it for fifty years, and for my own part I agree with those who think the curbstone of the well was the mouthpiece of the god's oracles. The orifice of this immense well, with which another and a smaller well grotesquely communicates, was closed by a colossal head of noble outline, whose perforated mouth gave forth the subterranean voice of the priestess. Why not? Those who say it was only the mask of a fountain are no surer. The head has been preserved from destruction in the lower story of a little tower, along with a pile of stone bullets found in the well. I have amused myself by taking a sketch of it, which I send you in this letter, with a portrait of my little Didier at its foot, lying sound asleep at full length upon the temple of the god. It does not look like him, to be sure; but it will give you an idea of the fantastic and charming picture which I have had before my eyes for the last fifteen minutes.

"As for other matters, I do not read at all here. I have not Peyraque's eight or ten stray volumes and his big old Protestant Bible. I no longer try to improve myself; I hardly think of it even. I mend the clothing of my Didier, following him step by step; I dream, I am sad, but not rebellious, and not given to wondering any further about a state of things to which I ought to submit, — and I am in good health, which is the most important thing.

"Good old Peyraque comes in, bringing your letter. Ah! my sister, do not give up weakly, or I shall be in despair. You say *he* is pale, already ill; and this gave you so much pain that you came near betraying me. Camille, if you have not strength enough to see a courageous man suffer, and if you do not understand that my courage alone can support his, I will set out again; I will go farther away still, and you shall not know where I am. Consider yourself notified, that the day I see the mark of a strange foot upon the sand of my island, I shall disappear so entirely that —"

Caroline left the sentence unfinished; Peyraque, who had just given her Ma-

dame Heudebert's letter, came back saying, "Here is the *gentleman* coming."

"Who? what?" cried Caroline, rising and evidently quite troubled. "What gentleman?"

"The father of the unknown child, — M. Bernyer he calls himself."

"Then you know his name? No one here knew it or would tell it."

"On my word, I am not very curious; but he threw his valise on a bench at Roquebert's door, and my eye happened to fall upon it, so I read."

"Bernyer! I don't know any such person; perhaps I might show myself without getting into difficulty."

"Why, certainly you must see him, to tell him about the little one; now is the time."

Roquebert came in, however, and defeated Peyraque's design. M. Bernyer was asking for his son; but, according to his custom, he had gone into a room, reserved for him especially, and did not wish, just then, to see any one not of the family.

"It is all the same," added Roquebert. "I will tell him how you took care of my wife and the little boy, and he will certainly give me something good to repay you with. Otherwise I will do it myself, out of my own pocket. Be easy about that."

He took the child in his arms and went out, closing the door behind him, as if to shut out even a curious look from following him into the passage leading to the stranger's room.

"Well, let us set out," said Caroline, whose eyes were full of tears at the thought that she would probably never see Didier again.

"No," replied Peyraque, "let us wait a little and see what the gentleman will think, when he knows you have stayed here five days to take care of his child."

"But don't you see, my friend, that Roquebert will take care not to tell him? He will never dare to own that, during his wife's illness, he knew of nothing better than trusting the child to a stranger. And beside, is he not anxious to keep Didier a year longer, which would be very feasible? Will he let us give the father a hint that the child would not only be better cared

for, with us, but also educated as he needs to be at his age? No, no. Dame Roqueberte herself, in spite of the care I have given her, will say that no one knows me, that perhaps I am only an adventuress; and while seeking gratitude and confidence, we shall look as if we were intriguing to get the few sous which have been offered us already."

"But when we refuse them it will be seen who we are. I am known myself; it is understood that Samuel Peyraque has never lied or held out his hand for money."

"This stranger knows nothing of all that, and he will inquire of the Roqueberts only because he knows nobody else. Let me set out quickly, my dear friend; I suffer every minute I stay here."

"Just as you like," said Peyraque. "I have not unharnessed, and we can let the horse rest at Le Puy; but nevertheless, if you would trust me, we should remain here one or two hours. Going thither from here, we would naturally meet on the way; the child would come to you and ask for you himself, he is so fond of you already. Look here now! If the gentleman should see you only one minute, I am sure he would say, 'Here is a person who is like no one else: I must speak to her.' And when he had talked with you —"

Arguing in this way, Peyraque followed Caroline, who had gathered up her clothing and was turning her steps toward the castle gate, quite determined to start. Passing before the bench where the stranger's valise was still lying beside his travelling-cloak, she read the name which Peyraque had reported faithfully; but at the same time she made a gesture of surprise and hurried along with unusual agitation.

"What is it now?" asked the good man, taking the reins.

"Nothing, — a fancy!" replied Caroline, when they were out of the enclosure. "I imagined I recognized the hand of the person who wrote the name of Bernyer on that valise."

"Bah! it was written just like print."

"That is true; I am silly! Never mind; let us go on, my good Peyraque."

Caroline was absorbed in thought all the way. She accounted for the singu-

lar emotion which the sight of this disguised handwriting had caused her by what she had just experienced in reading her sister's letter; but she had a new anxiety. M. de Villemer had never told her that he had seen the castle of Polignac with his own eyes, but he had given a fine description of it, and an accurate one, in his book; he had taken it as an example of the strength of feudal restorations in the Middle Ages, and Caroline knew he often travelled into the provinces, in order to get a distinct impression of historic places. She searched all the recesses of her memory to find what could not possibly be there, to see if the Marquis had not accidentally chanced to tell her that he had visited Polignac. "No," replied she to herself, "if he had said so, I should have been impressed by it on account of the names Lantriac and Le Puy, which Justine had mentioned." Then she tried to remember whether, in connection with Polignac, she had not spoken of Lantriac and Justine; but she had never mentioned either of them to him, she was quite sure; so she grew calmer.

Yet she was agitated and thoughtful. Why had she taken such a fancy to this unknown child? What was the peculiarity in his eyes, his attitude, and his smile? Was it that he looked like the Marquis? In the idea which had so suddenly presented itself, of educating a little child and wishing for this one, might there not have been a vague instinct more powerful than chance or Peyraque's instigations?

With all this uneasiness there came, too, in Caroline's despite, the secret torment of a confused jealousy. "He has a son, then, a child of love?" said she to herself. "He must, then, have loved some woman passionately before he knew me, for frivolous adventures are incompatible with his exclusive nature, and there has been an important mystery in his past life! The mother is still living perhaps. Why is she supposed to be dead?"

Advancing among these feverish speculations, she recalled the words of the Marquis under the cedar in the Jardin des Plantes, and the struggle she had caught a glimpse of between his filial

duty and some other duty, some other love, of which she herself might not be the object after all. Who knew whether the old Marchioness had not been equally at fault, whether the Marquis had told his mother the name of the person he wanted to marry; in short, whether she herself and Madame de Villemer had not both missed the truth?

Thus working herself into an involuntary excitement, Caroline strove in vain to feel reconciled to her fate. She loved, and for her the stronger feeling now was the fear rather than the hope of not being loved in return.

"What is the trouble?" asked Peyraque, who had learned to read her anxieties in her face.

She replied by overwhelming him with questions about this M. Bernyer whom he had seen once. Peyraque had a keen eye and a memory; but, habitually thoughtful and reserved, he bestowed his attention only on people who especially interested him. He drew, then, a picture of this pretended Bernyer so vague and incomplete that Caroline made no progress. She slept poorly that night, but toward morning she grew calm, and awoke saying to herself that there had been no common sense in her excitement of the day before.

Peyraque, having to go his rounds, could not linger till her awakening. He came in at nightfall. His air was triumphant.

"Our affair is working well," said he. "M. Bernyer will come here to-morrow, and you may rest easy; he is an Englishman, a sailor. You don't know any such person, do you?"

"No, not at all," replied Caroline. "You saw him again, then?"

"No, he had just gone out; but I saw Dame Roqueberte, who is better and begins to have her senses. She told me the little one cried last night, and before he fell asleep asked over and again for his Charlette. The father inquired who she was. It seems that Roquebert had no great wish to speak of you; but his wife, who is a good Christian, and the little girl, who is fond of you too, said you were an angel from heaven, and the gentleman replied he would like to thank you, and make

you some recompense. He asked where you lived ; he has never been at our house, but remembered me perfectly, and said he would come and see us soon. He promised the child this, and even that he would bring you back, in order to make him go to sleep."

"In all this," said Caroline, "I see only one thing, and that is, this stranger is coming to offer me money."

"Well, let him do it ; so much the better ! It will be an opportunity to show him you are not what he thinks. You will see one another, you will converse ; he will find you are an educated young lady, above what he supposes you are, and I will tell him your history, because this history of yours does you credit."

"No, no," replied Caroline, quickly. "What ! shall I intrust my secret to a stranger, after so many precautions to conceal my name and position ?"

"But since you do not know him ?" said Justine. "If you are agreed on the matter of the child, he should be intrusted with the whole. Having his secret, we can afford to give him ours. He would have no inducement to betray it."

"Justine !" cried Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, who was near a window that faced the street. "Listen ! Heaven ! not another word. There he is, certainly, this M. Bernyer. He is coming here, and it is — yes, I was sure — it is he ! It is M. de Villemer ! O my friends, hide me ! Tell him I am gone, that I am not coming back ! — If he sees me, if he speaks to me, — can't you feel that I am lost ?"

XXIV.

JUSTINE followed Caroline, who had escaped to her own room, and made signs to Peyraque that he should receive the Marquis and be self-possessed.

Peyraque was equal to the emergency. He received M. de Villemer with the calm dignity of a man who has the most rigid ideas of duty. It was no longer a question of putting him in communication with the pretended Charlette ; it was necessary to get him

away before any suspicions arose in his mind, or, in case they had already arisen, to dispel them at once. From the first words of the Marquis, Peyraque saw that he suspected nothing. Desirous to set out again in a few days with his son, whom he intended to keep nearer to himself in future, he had made the most of a fine morning to come on foot and repay this debt of gratitude to some generous stranger. He had not supposed the distance so great, and was, therefore, a little late in arriving. He confessed he was somewhat tired, and, in point of fact, his face betrayed both weariness and suffering.

Peyraque hastened to offer him food and drink, the duties of hospitality preceding everything else. He called Justine, who had, by this time, regained her composure ; and they waited upon M. de Villemer, who, catching at this opportunity of rewarding his entertainers generously, accepted their services with a good grace. He learned with regret that Charlette had gone away ; but there was no reason why he should ask many questions about her. He thought of leaving a present for her, which Justine, in a low tone, advised her husband to accept, that he might not be surprised at anything. Caroline would readily find a chance to send it back. Peyraque did not see the necessity ; his pride revolted at the idea of seeming to accept money on her account.

Caroline, in her little chamber, overheard this strife on a point of delicacy. The voice of the Marquis sent shudders through her. She dared not stir. It seemed as if M. de Villemer would recognize her footfall through the flooring. He, for his part, hoping to find a way of discharging his obligations under some different form, pretended and really tried to eat a little ; and after this inquired whether he could hire a horse to return with. The night was dark and the rain came on again. Peyraque agreed to carry him back and went out to get his wagon ready ; but first, he climbed up softly to Caroline's room. "This poor gentleman makes me uneasy," said he in a low voice. "He is very ill, that I am sure of. You can see drops of sweat on his forehead, and

yet he creeps up to the fire like a man with a fever-chill. He could not swallow two morsels, and when he breathes hard it seems to affect his heart like a spasm, for he puts his hand there, smiling bravely all the while, but afterwards carrying it to his head, as one does in severe pain.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Caroline, in alarm, "when he is ill it is so dangerous! You must not carry him back to-night; your wagon is not easy, and then the bad roads and the cold, and this rain and his fever! No, no, he must stay here to-night. But where, pray! He would rather sleep out of doors than at the inn, which is so untidy. There is only one way. Keep him from going, keep him here. Give him my room. I will gather up my things; it will not take long, and I will go to your daughter-in-law's."

"With my son's wife or in the village, you will be too near. If he should happen to be a little worse in the night you would come in spite of yourself, to take care of him."

"That is true. What shall I do?"

"Do you want me to say? Well, you have courage and health: I will take you to Laussonne, where you can pass the night with my sister-in-law; it is as neat there as it is here, and to-morrow, after he goes, I will come for you."

"Yes, you are right," said Caroline, doing up her bundle hastily. "Make him agree to stay, and tell your son, as you go by, to harness Mignon."

"No, not Mignon! he has been travelling all day. We must take the mule."

Peyraque, having given his orders, returned to tell the Marquis the rain had set in for the whole evening, which was indeed true; and, giving Justine a significant glance, he urged him to stay so cordially that M. de Villemer consented. "You are right, my friends," said he, with his heart-broken smile; "I am somewhat ill, and I am one of those who have no right to wish for death."

"No one has that right," replied Peyraque; "but you will not be dangerously sick here with us, I assure you. My wife will take good care of

you. The chamber up above is very clean and warm, and if you get worse you have only to knock lightly, just once; we shall hear it."

Justine went up stairs to prepare his room and embrace poor Caroline, who was really dismayed. What! said Caroline, speaking very low; "I know he is sick and I am going to desert him in this way. No. I was mad! I will stay."

"But that is just what Peyraque will never let you do," replied Justine. "Peyraque is stern; but what would you? Perhaps he is right. If you take pity on one another now, you will never be able to part again. And then—for myself I am sure you would never do anything wrong, but the mother—And then, think what other people might say!"

Caroline would not listen; Peyraque went up stairs, took her hand with an air of authority, and made her come down. She had put her poor heart under the guidance of this Protestant of the Cévennes; there was no longer any way of drawing back.

He led her out to the carriage and put in her bundle. At this moment Caroline, who had really lost her senses, escaped from his grasp, darted into the house through the kitchen-door, and caught sight of M. de Villemer, who was seated with his back toward her. She went no farther; her reason returned. And then his appearance reassured her a little. He had not that bruised, broken-down aspect she had seen him wear on the night of his former attack. He was sitting before the fire, reading in Peyraque's Bible. The little iron lamp hanging from the mantel-piece threw its light on his black hair, wavy like his son's, and partly also on his clear, strong forehead. M. de Villemer was doubtless suffering much, but he still wished to live; he had not lost hope.

"Here I am," said Caroline, returning to Peyraque. "He didn't see me, and I have seen him! I am more at ease. Let us start; but you must promise on your honor," added she, as she drew near the step of the carriage, "that if he is taken to-night with suffocation you will come for me at what-

ever damage to your horse. It must be done, do you see? No one else knows what this sick man needs in way of care — and you — you would see him die in your own house, and you would have it on your conscience forever!”

Peyraque promised, and they set out. The weather was dreadful, and the road frightful; but Peyraque knew every one of its holes and its stones. Besides, the distance was short. He left Caroline at the house of his sister-in-law, and had reached home again by eleven o'clock.

The Marquis was feeling better; he had gone to lie down after having chatted with Justine in such a friendly way that she was delighted. “Do you see, Peyraque, this man,” said she, “he has a good heart like hers — I can understand it perfectly myself —”

“Stop talking now,” said Peyraque, who knew the thinness of the flooring; “if he is asleep, we ought to sleep too.”

At Lantriac the night passed in absolute quiet. The Marquis actually rested, and at two o'clock awoke, having shaken off the fever. He felt imbued with a pleasant calm, such as he had not known for a long time, and he attributed this to some sweet dream that he had forgotten, though its impression remained. Unwilling to awaken his hosts, he kept still, gazing at the four walls of the little chamber, brightly lighted by his lamp, and grasping the facts of his position more positively than he had done before since Caroline's departure. He had debated a thousand extreme measures; then he had said to himself that his first duty was to his son; and the sight of this child had given him the force of will he needed to resist the physical disease which now began to threaten him anew. Within twenty-four hours he had fixed upon a definite plan. He would take Didier to Madame Heudebert, leaving with her a letter for Caroline, and then quit France for some time, so that Mlle. de Saint-Geneix, reassured by his absence, might return to be near her sister at Étampes. In the course of a few quiet weeks, the Marchioness would perhaps get further information, or perhaps her secret would be discovered by the Duke, who had

sworn he would draw it from her by surprise. If the Duke failed, Urbain was not at the end of his resources. He would come back quietly to the castle of Mauveroché, where his mother was to pass the summer with her daughter-in-law, and he would not let Caroline know of his return until he had cleared her in his mother's estimation, and thus again smoothed away every difficulty.

The most important and the most urgent thing, then, was to draw Mlle. de Saint-Geneix from her mysterious hiding-place. The Marquis still thought she was in some Parisian convent. He found himself compelled to stay a few days longer in Polignac to make sure of Dame Roqueberte's complete recovery, before grieving her by taking away his son, and this delay had fretted him more than anything else. To cheat his impatience, he asked himself why he should not write to Madame Heudebert at once and to Caroline also, that they might be prepared to rejoin each other after his departure for a foreign land. By this means he would perhaps gain a few days. He could mail the letter at once, as he would pass through Le Puy on his return to Polignac.

What gave him the idea of writing from Lantriac was, mainly, the sight of the little bureau, where Caroline had left pens, some ink in a cup, and a few stray sheets of paper. These objects, on which his gaze fastened mechanically, seemed inviting him to follow his inspiration. He rose noiselessly, put the lamp on the table, and wrote to Caroline.

“My friend, my sister, you will not desert an unhappy man, who, for a year past, has centred in you the hopes of his life. Caroline, do not mistake my meaning. I have a favor to ask of you which you cannot refuse. I am going away.

“I have a son who has no mother. I love him devotedly; I intrust him to you. Come back! — As for myself, I go to England. You shall never see me again, if you have lost faith in me, — but that is impossible. When have I been unworthy of your esteem? Caroline —”

The Marquis stopped abruptly. An

object of little importance had caught his eye. The ordinary paper, the steel pens, had no peculiarities; but one black bead lay on the table between his hand and the inkstand, a trifle insignificant in itself, but one bringing with it a whole world of memories. It was a bit of jet, cut and perforated in a certain unusual fashion. It was part of a valueless bracelet Caroline had worn at Séval; which he easily recognized because she used to take it off whenever she wrote, and he had himself formed a habit of toying with this bracelet while talking to her. He had handled it a hundred times, and one day she had said to him, "Pray don't break it, it is all I have left from my mother's jewel-box." He had looked at it respectfully, and held it lovingly in his hands. Just as she was on the point of quitting her little room in Lantriac, Caroline, in her precipitation, had broken this bracelet; she had picked up the beads hastily, leaving behind but this one.

This black bead reversed all the ideas of the Marquis; but what kind of dreaming was this? These cut jets might be an industrial product of the country he was then in. Nevertheless he sat motionless, absorbed in new surmises. He breathed and questioned the vague perfume of the room. He looked everywhere without moving from his chair. There was nothing on the walls, nothing on the table, nothing on the mantel. Finally he became aware of some bits of paper in the fireplace, which were not completely charred. He bent over the ashes, searched minutely, and found one single fragment of an address, only two syllables of which were legible: one, written by hand, was the last in the word Lantriac, the other, "*am*," forming part of the postmark. The postmark was that of Étampes, the handwriting that of Madame Heudebert. There could be no longer a doubt: Charlette was no one but Caroline, and perhaps she had never gone away, perhaps she was still in the house.

From that moment, the Marquis had the cunning, the watchfulness, the coolness, and the keen perception of a savage. He discovered the pipe from the little spring leading down to the

sink below. The pipe itself was stopped up, but there was more than one fissure in the plaster which surrounded it. He put his ear down to it closely, and caught Peyraque's long, even breathing as he lay yet asleep.

Not a word, though spoken ever so low, could then escape him. In a few moments he distinctly heard Justine rise, uttering the words, "Come, get up, Peyraque; perhaps poor Caroline has not been sleeping so well as we have!"

"A night is a night," said Peyraque; "besides, I can't go for her till after he has gone away."

Justine listened and replied, "He does n't stir, but he said he should get up at daybreak. Daylight is n't far off now; he means to go away without taking anything, he said so."

"It is all the same," rejoined Peyraque, who had now risen, and whose voice was even more audible, though he spoke quite low; "I don't want him to set out on foot; it is too far. The lad shall saddle my horse, and when I have seen him fairly off, I will start for Laussonne."

M. de Villemer had made sure. He stirred a little to show he was up, and went down stairs after having slipped his purse into the bureau-drawer. He seemed very impatient to get back to Polignac, and declaring he felt perfectly strong, obstinately refused the horse. It would have been an encumbrance in the war of observation he was about to wage. He shook hands cordially with his entertainers and set out; but, on the borders of the village, having inquired about the road of a passer-by, he changed his course, plunging into a by-way that led to Laussonne.

He thought he could arrive there in advance of Peyraque, wait for him stealthily, and see him take Caroline back. When he had made sure of her return to Lantriac, he would lay his plans further. Until then, being quite aware she was trying to escape him, he would not risk losing track of her again. But Peyraque was very expeditious; Mignon travelled fast in spite of the roads which grew worse and worse, forming one unbroken ascent in the direction of Laussonne, and crossing more

than one mountain declivity. The by-path cut off the angles of the main road but slightly, and the Marquis was distanced by the rustic equipage. He saw it pass and recognized Peyraque, who, for his part, thought he distinguished, in the morning fog, a man who was not in peasant garb, and who quickly retreated behind an embanking wall of rough stones.

Peyraque was suspicious. "Very likely," thought he, "he has been fooling us, or he has found out something. Well! if it is he, and if he is no more of an invalid than that, I will cure him of trying to follow a mountain horse on foot."

He urged Mignon forward, and arrived at Laussonne with the first rays of the sun. Caroline, in deadly anxiety, after a cruelly sleepless night, came out to meet him.

"All is going well," said he. "I was mistaken yesterday; he is not so very ill, for he slept well and would return on foot."

"So he is gone?" replied Caroline, climbing to her seat by Peyraque. "He never suspected anything, then? And I shall never see him again? Well, so much the better!" and she burst into tears under her hood, which she pulled over her face in vain. Peyraque heard her sob as if her heart would break.

"So you are the one going to be sick now?" said he, in a tone of paternal severity. "Come, be reasonable, or your Peyraque will never believe you when you tell him you are a Christian."

"So long as I do not weep before him, can you not excuse one moment of weakness in me? But what are you doing? Why are we going on toward Laussonne?"

Peyraque thought he again caught sight of the Marquis still creeping onward. "You must excuse me," said he, "but I have an errand to do in the village. It is quite near."

He entered the village, shrewdly thinking that the Marquis would still keep himself in sight at a distance. He went up the street and exchanged a few words with one of the townspeople. Pretexts could not fail to be at hand. Then, returning to Caroline, he said, "You

see, my daughter, you have too much on your mind. I want to revive your spirits; you know an excursion always does you good. Would you like to have me take you on one — O, a very pleasant one!"

"If you have business anywhere, I don't want to incommode you. I will go wherever you like."

"I shall have to go to the foot of Mezenc, to the village of Estables. It is a beautiful place really, and you have been longing to see the grandest of the Cévennes."

"You said it would be hard travelling over there until after next month."

"Bless me! Why, the weather is cloudy, to be sure, and perhaps the roads are a little damaged. I have n't passed over them since last year; but they have been worked upon, as I have heard, and besides you know with me there is no danger."

"I assure you I am in no mood to worry about danger. Let us set out."

Peyraque hurried on his horse, which soon crossed the boundaries of Laussonne and bravely descended the rocky hill, climbing the other slope again without delay, and even more rapidly. When they had reached the top, Peyraque turned round, saw no one in the paths behind him, and looked at the road ahead, which was taking on a discouraging aspect. "You are going to see a wilderness," said he; "but that need n't annoy you, need it?"

"No, no," replied she; "when we are desperate we cease to be annoyed."

Peyraque went on, not without warning his companion repeatedly that the sun might not be disposed to shine, that they had four leagues to go, and that perhaps Mezenc would be under a fog. All this had little interest for Caroline, who did not guess the hesitation of her old friend or his qualms of conscience.

They traversed a mountain wooded with pines, and cut into by a vast glade, — the result of an ancient felling of the trees, — which opened a gigantic avenue, where the road, from a distance, looked like a highway for a hundred chariots abreast; but when the little carriage had ventured in, it was a frightful task to get over the ground,

rain-soaked and hollowed out into deep ruts in a thousand places. Further on, it was worse still; the turf was strewn with blocks of lava, which left boggy places between them; and when they found traces of the travelled road again, they had to turn aside for monstrous piles of flints and pebbles, to stop altogether before deep cuts or trenches, to seek the old road among twenty others that lost themselves in the morass. The horse performed prodigies of courage, and Peyraque miracles of skill and judgment.

At the expiration of two hours, they had accomplished only two leagues, and were in open country on an interminable plateau, at an elevation of fifteen hundred metres. Except the breaks here and there in the road, nothing could be distinguished. The sun had disappeared; a thick mist enshrouded everything, and nothing can paint the feeling of bitter desolation which fell upon Caroline. Peyraque himself lost courage and kept silence. The obstructed road, which he had been forced to leave one side did not reappear, and for the last fifteen minutes they had been pacing over a spongy turf, broken up by the hoofs of cattle in search of pasturage, but no longer bearing any traces of wheels. The horse stopped, bathed in sweat; he thus gave warning that he had never been over this ground before.

Peyraque alighted, sinking almost knee deep in the boggy soil, and tried to find where he was. It was out of the question. The mountains and ravines were only one plain of white vapor.

"Have we lost our way?" asked Caroline with cool indifference.

At this point the wind made a little opening in the fog, and they saw in the distance fantastic horizons empurpled by the sun; but the mist closed in again so quickly that Peyraque could not determine his position from this isolated peak in the distant circle of mountains. However, they heard a confused barking and then voices, though they could not distinguish the dogs till they were quite upon them. These dogs were the advance-guard of a caravan of men and mules carrying vegetables and leather bottles. They were mountaineers who

had been down to the plains to exchange the cheese and butter of their cows for the fruits and vegetables of the level country. They accosted Peyraque, who asked information. They told him that he had done very wrong to think of going with a carriage to Estables at this season, that it could not be done, and that he would have to return. Peyraque showed some obstinacy, and asked if he was still far from the village. They guided him into the road again, telling him he had work before him for an hour and a half; but as their animals were loaded and warm, and they themselves in haste to arrive, these mountaineers offered no assistance, and disappeared, with a laugh at the little carriage. Caroline saw them rapidly vanish into the fog like shadows.

It was absolutely necessary to let the horse breathe, for a fresh effort to regain the solid road had exhausted him. "What comforts me," said Peyraque, really moved, "is that you don't complain of anything! It is very cold, nevertheless, and I'm sure the dampness has gone through your cloak."

Caroline replied only by a shiver.

A new shadow had just passed along the side of the road; it was M. de Villemer. He pretended not to see the carriage, although he did see it perfectly; but he chose to seem unconscious that it held any one he knew. He advanced with extraordinary energy, affecting an air of indifference.

"It is he! I saw him," said Caroline to Peyraque. "He goes wherever we go."

"Well, let him go on, and we will turn back."

"No, I cannot, I will not! He will die after such a walk. He will never reach Estables. Let us follow him."

This time Caroline's terror was so commanding that Peyraque obeyed. They came up with M. de Villemer, who moved aside to let them pass, without stopping or looking up. He would be neither intrusive nor rebellious, but he would know, he would follow to the death.

Unfortunately he was at the end of his strength. The difficulty of this walk, which from Lantriac had been a continual ascent and, for the last two

leagues, one chaos of stones and peaty turf, had started on him a profuse perspiration which he could feel freezing in the blast of a sharp wind that had suddenly veered to the east. He lost his breath, and was forced to stop.

Caroline turned her head toward him, and was on the point of crying out. Peyraque seized her arm. "Courage, my daughter," he said, with his stern religious fervor. "The Lord requires it at your hands." And she felt herself overborne by the strong faith of the peasant.

"What do you want to do for him?" resumed Peyraque, as he still drove on. "He has had strength to come so far, he will have enough to go the rest of the way. A man does not die from the effects of a walk. He will rest at Estables. And if he is sick, — I shall be there."

"But he is following me! You see I shall have to speak to him there or elsewhere."

"Why should he follow you? He does not suspect you are here even. So many travellers want to see Mezenc."

"In such weather as this?"

"The sun rose brightly, and we ourselves started to see Mezenc."

The Marquis saw Caroline hesitate and submit. This was the final blow. No sooner had he seen himself left behind than he felt he could go no farther. He sank down on a stone, his eyes fixed on the black speck slowly vanishing from his sight, for the wind had risen suddenly and was violently scattering the fog, in whose stead there now came light flurries of snow and sleet. "So she would have me know nothing more of her?" said he to himself, as he felt his strength failing. "She flees from hope, she has lost faith. Then she never loved me!"

And he lay down to die.

XXV.

"We must hasten, we must hasten!" said Peyraque, at the close of another half-hour, as he saw the snow deepening. "Here is something worse than fog. When this begins to fall it soon

piles up in the road higher than your head."

This imprudent admission set Caroline in open rebellion; she wanted to jump from the carriage, fully determined to walk back to the place where she had met M. de Villemer.

Peyraque dissuaded her from this; but finally had to yield and return, in spite of the ever-increasing danger and the difficulties of a still slower progress over the half-league they had so painfully traversed since losing sight of the Marquis.

It was in vain for them to search by simply looking for him. In one hour the snow in large, spreading flakes had buried up the ground and its ruggedness. It was impossible for them to tell whether they had not passed by the place they wanted to explore. Caroline uttered groans, inaudible to herself, finding no words at her command but the faint outcry, "My God, my God!" Peyraque no longer strove to quiet her, and only encouraged her by telling her to look carefully.

Suddenly the horse stopped. "It must be we have found the road again here," said Peyraque. "Mignon remembers."

"Then we have come too far," replied Caroline.

"But we have met no one," returned Peyraque. "This gentleman, seeing the storm coming on, has gone back to Laussonne, and we, who are nearer Estables, are running a great risk in staying here, unless it stops snowing. I give you warning."

"Go on, go on, Peyraque!" cried Caroline, leaping into the snow. "For my part, I shall stay here till I find him."

Peyraque made no reply. He alighted and began searching, but without the least hope. There was already half a foot of snow, and the wind, drifting it into every hollow, would soon bury up a corpse.

Caroline walked on at random, gliding forward like a spirit, so great was her excitement. She was already at some little distance from the carriage when she heard the horse snort loudly as he put down his head. She thought he was dying, and, watching him with

real distress, saw him scenting out something in front of him in a strange way. It was a revelation; she darted forward and perceived a gloved hand, apparently belonging to one dead, which the breath of the horse, melting the snow over it, had brought to light. The body extended beneath was the obstacle which the animal had refused to tread under foot. Peyraque came running at Caroline's call, and, extricating M. de Villemer, put him in the carriage, where Mlle. de Saint-Geneix held him up and tried to warm him in her arms.

Peyraque took the bridle and walked on again in the direction of Mezenc. He knew perfectly there was not a moment to lose, but went on without knowing where to set foot; and he soon disappeared in a ravine which he was unable to clear. The horse stopped of his own accord; Peyraque got up again, but, on trying to make him back, found the wheels caught in some unseen obstacle. Besides, the horse was at the end of his strength. Peyraque treated him harshly, but all to no purpose; he struck his pony for the first time in his life; he pulled on the bridle till the creature's mouth bled. The poor animal turned upon him with a glance of almost human intelligence, as if to say, "I have done all I could; I can do nothing more to save you."

"Must we then perish here?" said Peyraque, disheartened, as he watched the snow falling in inexorable whirls. The plateau had become a Siberian waste, beyond which Mezenc alone showed his livid head between the gusts of wind. Not a tree, not a roof, not a rock for shelter. Peyraque knew there was nothing to be done.

"Let us hope," said he, which, in these Southern forms of speech, simply means, "Let us wait."

It soon occurred to him, however, that he would gain the next fifteen minutes, even if they should be the last of life. He took a small board from his little carriage, and fought with the drifting snow, which threatened to bury up both horse and vehicle. Incessantly for ten minutes he worked like a wrestler at this task of clearing away, saying to himself that perhaps it was all use-

less, but that he would defend himself and Caroline to the last breath.

At the expiration of the ten minutes he thanked God; the snow grew lighter; the wind abated; the fog, which was far less dangerous, strove to reappear. He slackened his work without giving it over. At last he saw something like a pale streak of light breaking through the depths of the sky; it was a promise of fair weather.

So far he had not spoken a word or uttered an oath. If Caroline had been fated to perish there, she would not have suspected it till the last moment. Yet he looked at her and found her so pale and her glance so wild that he was alarmed.

"Well, well!" said he, "what is the trouble? There is no more danger; this will be nothing."

"O, nothing, is it?" she replied, with a bitter smile, pointing to Urbain, stretched out on the seat of the little vehicle, his face livid with the cold, his large eyes wide open and glazed, like those of a corpse.

Peyraque looked around him again. It was hopeless to expect human aid. He sprang into the carriage, seized M. de Villemer firmly in his arms, rubbed him vigorously, bruised him in his iron hands, trying to impart to him the warmth of his own old blood reanimated by exercise and a strong will; but it was all in vain. With the effects of the cold were united those of a nervous crisis peculiar to the organization of the Marquis.

"He is not dead, though," said Peyraque. "I feel that; I am sure of it. If I only had something to make a fire with! But I can't make one of stones."

"We might burn the carriage, at all events," cried Caroline.

"That is an idea, — yes, but after that?"

"After that perhaps the Lord will send help. Don't you see the first thing is to prevent death from laying hold of us here?"

Peyraque saw Caroline so pale and the blue lines so defined under her eyes that he began to think she felt herself dying also. He hesitated no longer, but risked all to save all. He unharnessed the pony, which, like the

horses of the Cossacks, at once rolled in the snow to rest himself. Taking the awning from his carriage and placing it on the ground, Peyraque carried M. de Villemer, still frozen and motionless, to it; then, drawing from his boxes a few handfuls of hay, some old papers, and fragments of matting, he put the whole under the vehicle and struck fire with the flint and steel with which he was accustomed to light his pipe. Breaking up with his farrier's tools the boards and planks of his poor little carriage, he succeeded in a few moments in kindling them into a blaze and into brands. He demolished and broke in pieces as fast as the fire burned. The snow no longer fell, and M. de Villemer, lying within a semicircle of blazing wreck, began to gaze in a stupor at the strange scene, which he took for a dream.

"He is saved, saved! Do you hear, Peyraque?" cried Caroline, who saw the Marquis making an attempt to rise. "A hundred blessings on your head! You have saved him!"

The Marquis heard Caroline's voice close by him, but, still thinking it some hallucination, made no effort to look at her. He did not comprehend what was taking place till he felt on his hands the distracted pressure of Caroline's lips. Then he thought he must be dying, as she no longer avoided him, and, trying to smile, he bade her adieu in a faint voice.

"No, no; not adieu!" she replied, covering his forehead with kisses; "you must live. I will have it so! I love you!"

A slight flush came over the livid face, but no words could express his joy. The Marquis still feared it might be all a dream; yet he was plainly reviving. The warmth had concentrated under the carriage-top which served him as a shelter. He was as comfortable as he could possibly be made there, lying on the cloaks of Caroline and Peyraque.

"But we must go on, nevertheless," thought the latter, and his unquiet eyes questioned the brightening horizon. The cold was severe, the fire was going out for want of fuel, and the invalid surely could not walk to Estables. And

was Caroline herself equal to such an attempt? To mount them both the horse was the only expedient; but would the exhausted animal have strength to carry them? No matter, would have to be tried; and, first of all, they must give the horse some food. Peyraque looked, but found none; the fire had consumed the little bag as well as the box in which it was stored.

An exclamation from Caroline revived his hopes. She showed him a light upon the rising ground which sheltered them. He ran in that direction and saw below him an ox-cart, painfully approaching, the driver smoking in order to keep warm.

"You see now," said Caroline, when the cart had nearly reached them, "the Lord has helped us!"

M. de Villemer was still so weak that he had to be lifted into the cart, which fortunately, was loaded with straw; and in this Peyraque buried him up, after the fashion. Caroline placed herself near him. Peyraque bestrode his pony, leaving the wreck of his poor carriage behind, and in an hour they had finally reached the village of Estables.

Peyraque went disdainfully by the inn of a certain giantess with bare legs and a golden necklace, a veritable target of peculiar repulsiveness. He knew the Marquis would find no zealous attention there. He conducted him to the house of a peasant whom he knew. The people crowded around the invalid, overwhelming him with questions, and friendly proffers which he did not understand. Peyraque, with an air of authority, dismissed all who could be of no service, gave his orders, and went to work himself. In a few minutes the fire was blazing, and hot wine was foaming in the kettle. M. de Villemer, stretched on a thick bed of straw and dry turf, saw Caroline on her knees beside him, busily engaged in protecting his clothes from the fire and caring for him with a mother's tenderness. She was uneasy about the terrible drink which Peyraque was brewing for him with strong spices; but the Marquis had confidence in the experience of the mountaineer. He made a sign that he would obey him, and Caroline, with trembling hand, put the cup to his lips. He was soon able

to speak, thank his new hosts, and tell Peyraque, pressing his hand warmly, that he would like to be alone with him and Caroline.

It was no easy thing to induce the family to forsake their own roof for several hours. Places of shelter are rare under this inclement sky, and the monks, the sole dependence of the Cévenois, are lodged in a way to leave no room for the inhabitants. Those living here, in particular, have a reputation for hardness and lack of hospitality which dates from the murder of the mathematician sent by Cassini to measure the height of Mezenc, and who was taken for a sorcerer. They have greatly improved, and now show themselves more civil; but their habits of life are those of the lowest poverty, and yet they are given to trading, raise magnificent cattle, and are as well provided as possible with commodities for barter. Still, the severity of the climate and the isolation of their rough dwelling-place have passed into their dispositions as well as into their blood.

The room which, with the stable, comprised the whole interior of the house, was given up at last to Peyraque and his friends. It was quite small, and hardly richer than the Celtic grotto of the old woman at Espaly. The smoke poured out partly through the chimney and partly, also, through a gaping hole in the wall on one side. Two beds, shaped like boxes, gave lodgings at night, in some incomprehensible way, to a family of six persons. The bare rock formed the floor; and on one side the cows, goats, sheep, and hens took their comfort.

Peyraque spread clean straw around everywhere, brought in a supply of wood, rummaged in the cupboard, found some bread, and urged Caroline to eat and rest. The Marquis, with a look, begged her to think of herself, for she dared not leave him a minute, and still held his hands in hers. He wanted to speak; he was able to speak now, and yet he was afraid to say a word. He feared she would go away from him as soon as she saw he knew himself beloved; and then Peyraque puzzled him cruelly. He did not comprehend in the least the part played by this rustic Providence

which, in its watch over Caroline, had shown itself so obstinate and so merciless toward him; but which was now beginning to regard him with unbounded solicitude and devotion. At last Peyraque went out. He could not forget his poor horse,—his faithful companion,—which he blamed himself for having treated so brutally, and which, on his arrival, he had been forced to intrust to the care of strangers.

"Caroline," said the Marquis, having seated himself on a stool, and still leaning on her arm, "I had many things to tell you, but I have not my reason,—no, really, I have n't the use of it, and I'm afraid to talk in my delirium. Forgive me, I am so happy,—happy to see you, to feel you near me, now I have come back again from the verge of death. But I cannot trouble you any more. Heavens! what a burden I have been on your life! It shall be so no longer; this is only an accident,—a foolish, imprudent act on my part; but how could I consent to lose you again? You do not know, you never will know,—no, you have no idea, you don't comprehend what you are to me; and perhaps you don't care ever to comprehend it! To-morrow, perhaps, you will shun me again. And why, pray? Here, read!" he added, searching for and then handing her the crumpled page of the letter begun at Lantriac that very morning; "it may be illegible now; the rain and the snow—"

"No," said Caroline, leaning toward the fire, "I can see, I read perfectly, and—I understand. I knew before. I guessed; and I accept. It was the wish of my heart,—the dream of my life. My heart and my life, do they not both belong to you?"

"Alas! no, not yet; but if you would believe in me—"

"Don't tire yourself by talking, trying to convince me," said Caroline, with something imperious in her warmth. "I believe in you, but not in my own destiny. Well! I accept it, such as you make it for me. Good or ill, it shall be dear to me, since I can accept no other. Now listen, listen to me! Perhaps I have only an instant to tell you this in. I don't know what events your conscience and mine will have to

meet; I know your mother to be inexorable. I have felt the chill of her contempt; and we have nothing to hope from God if we break her heart. We must submit, then, and that forever. You yourself have said that to form any scheme of being happy upon the loss of a mother is placing the dream of happiness among the most criminal of thoughts, and such happiness would be under the ban of a hundred curses; we ourselves should curse it in our hearts."

"Why do you remind me of all this?" asked the Marquis, sorrowfully; "do you think I have forgotten? But you believe a change in my mother to be impossible; and I see from this that you would not have me try to bring it about, and that pity alone—"

"You see nothing at all," cried Caroline, putting her hand on his mouth; "you see nothing, if you don't see that I love you."

"O Heaven!" said the Marquis, sinking to her feet; "say that again! It seems like a dream. This is the first time you have said it. I have thought I divined it, but I dare not believe it now. Tell me so again, — tell me, and then let me die!"

"Yes; I love you more than my own life," she replied, pressing to her heart the noble brow, seat of a soul so brave and true; "I love you more than my pride, more than my pride of womanhood. I have denied it to myself this long time; I have denied it in my prayers to God, and I lied to God and to myself! At last I understood, and I fled through a cowardly weakness. I felt all was lost, and so it is. Well, what matters it, after all? It only involves myself. While I cherished the hope of learning to forget, I could struggle; but you love me too well, — I see that now, — and you will die, if I forsake you. I thought you were dead a few hours ago, and then I saw clearly into our lives; I had killed you! I might have saved you, — you, the noblest and best of beings, — but I made you the victim of my vain self-respect. And what am I to let you die so, when all that is not your regard is nothing to me? No, no! I have resisted long enough. I have been proud enough, cruel enough, and you have suffered too

much from my wrong-doing. I love you, do you hear? I will not become your wife, because that would be to plunge you into bitter remorse, into a woe beyond remedy; but I will be your friend, your servant, a mother to your child, your faithful companion. The purity of our lives may be misunderstood; I shall be mistaken for Didier's actual mother perhaps. Well, I consent even to that. I accept the scorn I have dreaded; and it seems to me drinking of this cup, poured out by you, will give me a new life."

"O noble heart! as pure as heaven!" cried the Marquis. "I accept, for my part, this divine sacrifice. Pray do not scorn me for that! You make me feel worthy of it, and I will soon put an end to it. Yes, yes! I shall work miracles. I feel strong enough now. My mother will yield without a regret. In my heart I feel now the faith and the power that shall persuade her to it. But even if the whole world should rise up to condemn you, — do you see? — you, my sister and my daughter, my pure-minded companion, my dearest friend, — you will only stand the higher in my regard. I shall only be more and more proud of you. What is the world, what is public opinion, to a man who has penetrated the social life of past ages and that of the present as well, fathoming the mysteries of their selfishness and the nothingness of their deceit? Such a man knows full well that, at all times, by the side of one poor truth which floats safely, a thousand truths go under with the mark of infamy upon them. He well knows that the best and most unselfish spirits have walked in the footprints of their Lord, on a thorny path, where wounds and insults fall like rain. Well, we will walk there, if need be; love will keep us from feeling these base attacks. Yes, I can answer for that, at least, and this is what I can swear in defiance of all threats from that destiny the world would make for us: you shall be loved, and you shall be happy! You knew me well, cruel one, shutting your eyes as you ran away. You knew perfectly that my whole life, my whole soul is love and nothing else. You knew perfectly that, if I have sometimes been eager in pursuit of truth, it was from

love of her alone ; and not for the vain glory of proclaiming her in person. I am not myself a scholar ; I am not an author. I am an unknown soldier, who, of my own free will, avoid the noise and smoke of the conflict, fighting unsupported and in the background, not through lack of courage, but that my mother and brother may not be wounded in the struggle. I have accepted this obscure position without a pang to my vanity. I felt that my heart stood in need, not of praise, but of love. All the ambition of my fellows, all their immoderate vanities, their thirst for power, their needs of luxury, their continual hunger for notoriety, — what did all these matter to me ? I could not be amused with toys like these. I was myself only a poor, single-hearted man, enamored of an ideal, — an ingenuous child, if you will, seeking love and feeling it alive within him long before meeting her who was to develop its power. I kept silence, knowing I should have to bear raillery, — a thing indifferent, as far as I am concerned personally, but one which would have pained me as an outrage to my inmost, sacred religion. Once, only once in my life, — I should like to tell you this, Caroline, — I have loved — ”

“ Don’t tell me ! ” cried she, “ I don’t want to know.”

“ Nevertheless, you ought to know all. She was good and gentle, and, in recalling her, I can without an effort respect and bless her in her tomb ; but she could not love me. It was the fault of her destiny, and not her own. There is not a reproach in my heart for her ; there are many for myself. I have hated myself bitterly, and done heavy penance for having yielded to a passion which was never encouraged or really shared. I was only reconciled to life when I saw life blooming into its fairest and purest form in you. I then understood why I was born in tears, why I had been fated to love, and condemned to love too early, — with sorrow, and in sin, — because I sought the one dream and aim of my life too eagerly. And now I feel restored forever and saved. I feel that my character will regain its balance, my youth its hopes, my heart its natural suste-

nance. Have faith in me, — you whom Heaven has sent me ! You know for a certainty that we are made for each other. You have felt a thousand times, in spite of yourself, that we had but one mind and one thought ; that we loved the same principles, the same art, the same names, the same people, and the same things without influencing each other, except to strengthen and develop what was already there, — to make the germs of our deepest feelings bud and blossom. Do you remember, Caroline, do you remember Séval ? And our sunny hours in the valley ? And the hours of delicious coolness beneath the arches of the library, where, with lovely vases of flowers, you paid festive honors to this deep, mysterious union of our souls ? Was it not an indissoluble marriage which our hands consecrated every morning in their pure touch of greeting ? Did not our first glance every single day give us to each other, and that for all time ? And can all this be lost utterly, flown forever ? Did you yourself believe for one instant that this man could live without you, deprived of air and sunlight, — that he would consent to fall back into darkness again ? No, no ! you never believed it. He would have followed you to the ends of the earth ; he would have gone through fire and water and ice to rejoin you. And if you had left me to die in the snow to-day, can’t you feel that my spirit set free would have still, like a desperate spectre, pursued you through the mountain storm ? ”

“ Listen to him, just listen ! ” said Caroline to Peyraque, who had come in and was stupidly looking at the Marquis, now seemingly transfigured by passion ; “ hear what he says, and do not wonder if I love him better than myself. Do not be frightened, do not worry, do not go away, pitying us. Stay with us and see how happy we are. The presence of a good old man like you will not trouble us. Perhaps you will not understand us, — you who would listen to nothing beyond a certain duty, which I understood yesterday, but no longer admit to-day ; yet, against your will even, you will love me again and give me your blessing, for you will feel the rightful authority of this man,

who is more to me than all other men, and to whom God has given only the words of truth. Yes, I love him. — I love you, you whom I came near losing to-day, and I will never leave you again. I will follow you everywhere; your child shall be mine, as your country is my country, your faith my faith. There is no higher honor in this world, there is no other virtue before God, than loving you, serving you, and comforting you.”

M. de Villemer stood there, radiant with a pure joy, which dazzled Caroline, but did not frighten her. In this hour of enthusiasm there was not even the memory of a trouble. He pressed her to his heart with that sacred paternal feeling which belonged to his nature, and which arose from an instinctive idea of protection, — the rightful authority of a high intelligence over a noble heart, of a superior mind over another mind raised by its love to the same level.

They did not ask themselves whether this lofty rapture would endure always. It must be said, to their praise, that they felt the infinite tenderness of friendship, — enthusiastic, it is true, but deep and sincere, — rather than any other intoxication; and that the aim of their future was, at this moment, defined and summed up in their minds in this one resolution, — never to forsake each other.

XXVI.

AT about four o'clock, while the brightening skies permitted Peyraque to make preparations for their return, by hiring another cart well provided with straw and blankets, together with oxen and a skilful teamster, so as to reach Laussonne before evening, the young and beautiful Duchess d'Aléria, robed in moire, her arms loaded with cameos, came into the apartment of her mother-in-law at the castle of Mauveroché, in Limousin, leaving her husband and Madame d'Arglade chatting with apparent friendliness in a magnificent drawing-room.

Diana had an air of joyful triumph, which struck the Marchioness.

“Well, what is it, my beauty?” asked the old lady. “What has happened? Has my other son returned?”

“He will come soon,” replied the Duchess. “You have the promise of it, and, you know, we feel no uneasiness on his account. His brother knows where he is, and declares we shall see him again by the end of the week. So you find me excessively gay, — excessively happy, even — This little Madame d'Arglade is delightful. Dear mamma, she is the source of all my happiness.”

“O, you are jesting, little masquerader! You can't endure her. Why have you brought her here? I did n't request it. No one can amuse me but you.”

“And I undertake it more bravely than ever,” replied Diana, with a bewitching smile, “and this very D'Arglade whom I adore is going to furnish me with weapons against your wretched melancholy. Listen, dear, good mamma. At last we have got her awful secret, though not without trouble, by any means. For three days we have been manœuvring round her, — the Duke and I, — overpowering her with our mutual trust, our surrender of ourselves to happiness, our most graceful tenderness. At last, the estimable woman, who is n't our dupe, and whom our aggravating mockeries drove to extremity, has given me to understand that Caroline had for an accomplice in her great fault — O, you know whom. She has told you. I pretended not to understand; it was a little thrust right into my heart, — no, a deep thrust, I must tell the truth, — but I hastened to find my dear Duke, and flung it squarely in his face. ‘Is it true, you dreadful man, that you have been in love with Mlle. de Saint-Geneix?’ The Duke sprang like a cat, — no, like a leopard whose paw has been trodden on. ‘There! I was sure of it,’ said he, roaring; ‘it is our good Léonie who has invented that.’ And then he began to talk of killing her, so I had to quiet him and tell him I did n't believe it, which was n't quite true; I did believe it a little bit. And this son of yours, who is n't dull, — he perceived that, and he flung himself at my feet, and he

swore—O! but he did swear by all that I believe and love, by the true God, and then by you, that it was an infamous lie; and now I am as sure of this as I am that I came into the world for nothing else but just to love his Grace the Duke.”

The Duchess had a childish lisp, as natural as Madame d'Arglade's was affected, and she united with this a tone of resolute sincerity that made her perfectly charming. The Marchioness had no time to wonder over what she heard, for the Duke came in as triumphant as his wife.

“There!” cried he. “God be praised, you will never see that viper again! She has called for her carriage; she is going off furious, but with no poison in her fangs. I can answer for that. Mother, my poor mother, how you have been deceived. I can appreciate your suffering. And you would n't say a word, not even to me, who could in a breath— But I have confessed her, this odious woman, who would have brought despair into my household, if Diana were not an angel from heaven, against whom the Powers of Darkness will never prevail. Well, mother, be a little vexed with us all; it will do you good. Madame d'Arglade saw,—did she not?—with her own two eyes, saw Mlle. de Saint-Geneix leaning on my arm and crossing the lawn of Séval at daybreak? She saw me speak to her affectionately and shake hands with her? Well, she did n't see the whole, for I kissed her hands one after the other, and what she did n't overhear I'm going to tell you, for I remember as well as if it happened yesterday,—I was excited enough for that. I said to her, ‘My brother has been at the point of death to-night, and you have saved him. Pity him, still keep him under your care, help me to hide his illness from our mother, and, thanks to you, he will not die.’ That is what I said, I swear it before Heaven, and this is what had taken place.”

The Duke recounted the whole, and, going into the matter more thoroughly still, even confessed his false notions about Caroline and his fruitless manoeuvring which she had not even perceived. He described the outburst of

jealousy against him on the part of the Marquis; their disagreement for one hour; their passionate reconciliation; the confession of the one, the solemn oaths of the other; the discovery he made at that moment of his brother's alarming condition; his own imprudence in leaving him, thinking him asleep and comfortable; the broken window-pane, the cries Caroline overheard; and Caroline herself rushing to his aid, reviving the sick man, staying beside him, devoting herself from that time onward to caring for him, amusing him, and aiding him in his work.

“And all this,” added the Duke, “with a devotedness, a frankness, a forgetfulness of self, unequalled in all my experience. This Caroline, you see, is a woman of rare worth, and I have sought in vain for a person who would suit my brother better in point of age, character, modesty, or congenial tastes. I do not find one anywhere. You know I have desired to have him make a more brilliant match. Well, now that he is safe from serious embarrassment, thanks to this angel here who has restored us all to freedom and dignity; now that I have seen the persistence and strength of my brother's love for a person who is, more than all others, the sincere friend he needs; and, lastly, now that Diana understands all this better than I and exhorts me to believe in love-matches, I have, dear mother, only one thing to say, which is, that we must find Caroline again, and you must cheerfully give her your blessing as the best friend you ever had, except my wife, and the best daughter you can wish beside her.”

“O my children!” cried the Marchioness, “you make me so happy. I have hardly lived since this calumny. Urbain's grief, the absence of this child who was dear to me, the fear of setting at variance two brothers so perfectly united, if I acknowledged what I supposed to be true, what I am so glad to find false. We must hasten after the Marquis, after Caroline; but where, for Heaven's sake? You know where your brother is; but he,—does he know where she is?”

“No, he set out without knowing,”

replied the Duchess; "but Madame Heudebert knows."

"Write her, dear mother; tell her the truth, and she will tell Caroline."

"Yes, yes, I am going to write," said the Marchioness; "but how can I let poor Urbain know at once?"

"I will take charge of that," said the Duke. "I would go myself, if the Duchess could go with me, but to leave her for three days, — on my word, it is too soon!"

"Fie!" cried the Duchess; "as soon as the honeymoon is over do you mean to be running off without me in that way, light-hearted and light-footed too? Ah! how mistaken you are, you charming man! I shall keep you in order, with all your inconstancy."

"And pray how will you do it, then?" asked the Duke, looking at her fondly.

"By loving you always more and more. We shall see whether you grow weary of it."

While the Duke was caressing the golden hair of his wife, the Marchioness was writing to Camille with a youthful sprightliness which was certainly remarkable. "Here, my children," said she, "is this right?" The Duchess read, "My dear Madame Heudebert, bring Caroline back to us, and let me embrace you both. She has been the victim of a horrible slander; I know all. I weep for having believed in the fall of an angel. May she forgive me! Let her come back; let her be my daughter always and never leave me again. There are two of us who cannot live without her."

"That is delightful! It is kind and just like you," said the Duchess, sealing up the note; and the Duke rang while his mother was writing the address.

The message being despatched, she said to them, "Why can't you both go after the Marquis? Is he so very far off?"

"Twelve hours by post, at the very most," replied the Duke.

"And I cannot know where he is?"

"I ought not to tell you; but I'm convinced he will now have no more secrets from you. Happiness induces confidence."

"My son," returned the Marchioness,

"you alarm me seriously. Perhaps your brother is here sick, and you are hiding it from me, as you did at Séval. He is worse even; you make me believe he is away because he is n't able to be up."

"No, no!" cried Diana, laughing; "he is n't here, he is n't sick. He is abroad, he is travelling, he is sad, perhaps; but he is going to be happy now, and he did n't start without some hope of mollifying you."

The Duke solemnly assured his mother that his wife was telling the truth. "Well, my children," resumed the Marchioness, still uneasy, "I wish I could know you were with him. How shall I say it? — He has never been ill but that I have suspected it or at least felt a peculiar uneasiness. I was conscious of this at Séval, exactly at the period when he was so ill without my knowledge. I see that what you describe coincides with a fearful night which I passed then. Well, to-day, this morning, I was all alone, and I had what I may call a waking dream. I saw the Marquis pale, wrapped in something white, a shroud, perhaps, and I heard in my ear his voice, his own voice, saying, 'Mother.'"

"Heavens! what fancies you torment yourself with!" said the Duke.

"I don't torment myself willingly; and I let my presentiments comfort me, for I want to tell you the whole. For an hour past I have known that my son is well; but he has been in danger to-day. He has suffered, — or it may have been an accident. Remember now the day and the hour."

"There! you must go," said the Duchess to her husband. "I don't believe a word of all this, but we must reassure your mother."

"You shall go with him," said the Marchioness. "I don't want my gloomy notions, which, after all, are perhaps morbid and nothing else, to give you the first annoyance of your married life."

"And leave you alone with these ideas!"

"They will all vanish as soon as I see you going after him."

The Marchioness insisted. The Duchess ordered a light trunk; and two hours afterward she was travelling by post with her husband through Tulle and Aurillac, on the way to Le Puy.

The Duchess knew the secret of her brother-in-law ; she was ignorant of the mother's name, but aware of the existence of the child. The Marquis had authorized the Duke to have no secrets from his wife.

At six in the morning they reached Polignac. The first face which attracted Diana's notice was that of Didier. She was impressed, as Caroline had been, with a sudden impulse of tenderness toward this dear little creature, who captivated all hearts. While she was looking at him and petting him, the Duke inquired for the pretended M. Bernyer. "My dear," said he to his wife, coming back, "my mother was right ; some accident has happened to my brother. He went away yesterday morning for a few hours' ramble over the mountain, but has not returned yet. The people here are uneasy about him."

"Do they know where he went ?"

"Yes, it is beyond Le Puy. The post will carry us so far, and I can leave you there. I shall take a horse and a guide, for there is no road passable for carriages."

"We will take two horses," said the Duchess. "I'm not tired a bit ; let us start."

An hour after the intrepid Diana, lighter than a bird, was galloping up the slope of the Gagne and laughing at her husband's anxiety about her. At nine o'clock in the morning they were swiftly passing through Lantriac, to the great wonderment of the townspeople, alighting soon at the Peyraque-Lanion domicile to the equally great disgust of the village innkeeper.

The family were at table in the little workshop. The wanderers had returned the night before after some slight detention, but without accident. The Marquis, weary but not sick, had accepted the hospitality of Peyraque's son, who lived near by. Caroline had slept delightfully in her little room. She was helping Justine to wait upon "the men of the house," that is, the Marquis and the two Peyraques. Radiant with happiness she went back and forth, now waiting on the rest, and now seating herself opposite M. de Villemer, who let her have her own way, watching her with delight, as if to say, "I permit

this now, but how I shall repay all these attentions, by and by !"

What an outburst of joy and surprise filled Peyraque's house at the appearance of the travellers ! The two brothers gave each other a long hugging. Diana embraced Caroline, calling her "sister."

They spent an hour talking over everything by snatches, extravagantly, without comprehending one another, without feeling sure they were not all dreaming. The Duke was almost fainted and found Justine's dishes excellent, for she prepared another plentiful breakfast, while Caroline assisted her, laughing and weeping at the same time. Diana was in a wildly venturesome mood, and wanted to undertake seasoning the dishes, to her husband's great dismay. At last they seriously resumed their respective explanations and recitals. The Marquis began by sending off a courier to Le Puy with a letter for his mother, whose anxiety and strange presentiments they had mentioned the first thing.

They shed no tears on quitting the Peyraques, for these good people had promised to come to the wedding. The next day they had reached Mauveroché again with Didier, whom the Marquis placed in his mother's lap. She had been prepared for this by her son's letter. She loaded the child with caresses, and, restoring him to Caroline's arms, she said, "My daughter, you accept, then, the task of making us all happy ? Take my blessing a thousand times over, and if you would keep me here a long while, never leave me again. I have done you much harm, my poor angel ; but God has not allowed it to last long, for I should have died from it sooner than you."

The Marquis and his wife passed the rest of the bright season at Mauveroché, and a few autumnal days at Séval. This place was very dear to them ; and, in spite of the pleasure at meeting their relatives again in Paris, it was not without an effort that they tore themselves away from a nook consecrated by such memories.

The marriage of the Marquis astounded no one ; some approved, others disdainfully predicted that he would re-

pent this eccentricity, that he would be forsaken by all reasonable people, that his life was a ruin, a failure. The Marchioness came near suffering a little from these remarks. Madame d'Arglade pursued Diana, Caroline, and their husbands with her hatred; but everything fell before the revolution of February, and people had to think of other matters. The Marchioness was terribly frightened, and thought it expedient to seek refuge at Séval, where she was happy in spite of herself. The Marquis, just as his anonymous book was about to appear, postponed its publication to a more quiet period. He was unwilling to strike the sufferers of the day. Blest with love and family joys, he is not impatient for glory.

The old Marchioness is now no more. Feeble in body and far too active in mind, her days have been numbered. She passed away in the midst of her children and grandchildren, blessing them all without knowing she was leaving them, conscious of bodily infirmities, but preserving her intellectual force and natural kindness to the last, and laying plans, as most invalids do, for the next year.

The Duke is growing quite fleshy in his prosperity; but is still good-humored, handsome, and active enough. He lives in great luxury, but without extravagance; referring everything to his wife, who governs him, and keeps him on his good behavior, with rare tact and admirable judgment, notwithstanding the indulgent spoiling of her fondness for him. We would not assert that he has never thought of deceiving her; but she has contrived to counteract his fancies without letting him suspect it, and her triumph, which still endures, proves once more that there are sometimes wit and power enough in the brain of a girl of sixteen to settle the destiny, and that in the

best possible way, of a professed profligate. The Duke, still wonderfully good-natured and somewhat weak, finds more delight than one would think in giving over his skilfully planned treacheries toward the fair sex, and in going to sleep, without further remorse, on the pillow of comfortable propriety.

The Marquis and the new Marchioness de Villemer now pass eight months of the year at Séval, always occupied — we cannot say with one another, because they are so united that they think together and answer each other before the question is asked, but — with the education of their children, who are all sprightly and intelligent. M. de G—— is dead. Madame de G—— has been forgotten. Didier is formally recognized by the Marquis as one of his children. Caroline no longer remembers that she is not his mother.

Madame Heudebert is established at Séval. All her children are brought up under the united care of the Marquis and Caroline. The sons of the Duke, petted more, are not so intelligent or so strong; but they are amiable and full of precocious graces. The Duke is an excellent father, and is astonished, though quite needlessly, to find that his children are already so large.

The Peyraques have been loaded with gifts. Last year Urbain and Caroline went back to visit them, and, this time, they climbed, under a fine sunrise, the silvery peak of Mezenc. They also wanted to see once more the poor cabin where, in spite of the Marquis and his liberality, nothing is changed for the better; but the father has bought land and thinks himself wealthy. Caroline seated herself with pleasure by the miserable hearth, where she had seen at her feet, for the first time, the man with whom she would have willingly shared a hut in the Cévennes, and forgetfulness of the whole world.

THE END.

A ROLLING STONÉ.

BY

GEORGE SAND.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

CARROLL OWEN.

NEW YORK:

R. WORTHINGTON, 750 BROADWAY.

1879.

14

A ROLLING STONE.

I.

I WAS on a tour of inspection of finance in the little town of Arvers, in Auvergne, and I had been staying for two days at the hotel of the Grand Monarque. What grand monarch? and why this classic sign, still so widely spread in provincial towns? Is it a tradition of the reign of Louis XIV.? I am absolutely ignorant, and I ask any one who knows. The image which characterized this illustrious and mysterious personage has disappeared almost everywhere. In my childhood I remember having seen one which represented him dressed like a Turk.

The hostess of the Grand Monarque, Madame Ouchafol, was a comely and very respectable woman, devoted to all that pertained to any sort of established authority, ancient or modern nobility, plebeian opulence, official position, or local influence, — all this without prejudice to that consideration due to the minor functionaries and commercial travellers who constitute the standing source of profit, the regular *rotation* of an inn. Additionally, Madame Ouchafol had religious sentiments, and opposed the sceptics of her neighborhood.

One evening, when I was smoking my cigar on the hotel balcony, I saw,

upon the place which divides the church from the mayoralty and the inn, a tall young man whose face and bearing would attract attention anywhere. He was arm in arm with a very ugly peasant-girl. Two young fellows, slightly inebriated, who looked like artisans in holiday garb, followed him, walking like him with girls in peasant-caps, but pretty enough. Why had this handsome youth, whose simple dress did not lack taste, and who did not appear intoxicated, selected for partner or companion the ugliest and least smartly dressed?

This little problem would not have arrested my attention beyond a minute, if Madame Ouchafol, who was dusting the leaves of a blighted orange-tree placed upon the balcony, had not taken care to make me notice it.

"You are looking at handsome Lawrence, are you not?" she said to me, casting on the merry-making Antinous the most ironical and scornful glance.

And, replying to my answer without waiting for it: —

"He is a pretty fellow, I do not deny it; but see! always in bad company! He may be the son of a peasant, but he has a rich and titled uncle, and besides, when one has re-

ceived an education, and dresses like a gentleman, he does not hobnob with everybody at the village weddings; above all, he does not pass through the town in broad daylight, with frights like that upon his arm! But that boy is mad; he cares for nothing; and there is one surprising thing, monsieur, he never devotes himself to a pretty girl who might do him credit. He always drags about some monster, and not the most straight-laced, I beg you to believe!"

"I will believe whatever you wish, Madame Ouchafol; but how do you explain this singular taste?"

"I do not take it upon myself to explain it. One can make nothing of the conduct of this poor boy; for still, monsieur, I am interested in him. His godmother has been my friend from childhood, and often we lament together to see him turn out so badly."

"He is then a downright good-for-nothing?"

"Ah! monsieur, if that were all! If he was only a little fast and reckless! If one could say, 'He amuses himself, he is wild, he is a scapegrace, who will reform like so many others!' But no, monsieur. He drinks a little, but he does not run in debt; he has not bad habits exactly; neither is he quarrelsome, except on some occasion, when he sees at the village *fêtes* or at the mechanics' balls a man maltreated, he fights off those who bully him, and beats them well, according to accounts. In short, he might be something, for he is neither stupid nor idle; but here is the trouble,—monsieur has ideas,

and one idea in particular, which is the despair of his relations!"

"You make me curious to know this famous idea."

"I will tell you so much, that, instead of accepting a situation in the custom-house, or in the telegraph-office, or a tobacconist's shop, or something at the record office, the registry or the mayoralty,—for they have offered him all these,—he preferred to live in the faubourg with his father, who is an old farmer, and who has bought a piece of ground which he has converted into a nursery. This poor Father Lawrence is a worthy man, very industrious, who has only this one child, and who would have liked to raise him above his condition, hoping that his elder brother, who is very wealthy, would take a fancy to him, and make him his heir. Not at all; the young man, who, after his bachelor's degree, had gone to Normandy, where the rich uncle resides, allowed himself to be led away into frightful misconduct, monsieur, and disappeared for two or three years, without giving any report of himself."

"What misconduct, Madame Ouchafol?"

"Ah! monsieur, permit me not to tell you, from esteem for Father Lawrence, who raises fruit along his walls, and has always supplied me with fine peaches and raisins, not to mention vegetables, which he raises also at the foot of his enclosure, for which he buys the manure from my stable, and pays for it better than many people of higher station; through friendship likewise for the young man's godmother, who has been my

friend, as I have told you, ever since we made our first communion together, I ought to conceal the misfortune and the shame, that this handsome Lawrence, as they call him here, has brought upon his friends, and which would spread throughout the town, if by some mischance the thing should get about."

It became evident that Madame Ouchafol was dying with the wish to impart to me the mystery of handsome Lawrence's "misconduct." More mischievous than curious just then, I punished her for her reticence by taking my hat, and going out to breathe the air beside a pretty streamlet, which glides along the slope where the town is charmingly situated.

Many small towns are, like this, charming in appearance when viewed as a whole from without, hideous and dirty within. A projecting crag, a ray of sunlight resting on an old spire, a fine wooded line in the background, a streamlet at the foot, suffice to make up a picture which sets them off to perfection, and of which they form the principal accident, whose arrangement leaves nothing to desire.

I gave myself up entirely to the calm pleasure of contemplation, and I saw the last reflections of the sunset die out in an admirably clear sky. This presage of fine weather for the morrow recalled a plan which I had formed of visiting a cascade that one of my predecessors in the office which I filled had recommended to me. It was too late to undertake any walk whatever; but, as I was passing near a rustic tavern whence issued noise

and light, I resolved to make inquiries there.

I fell into the midst of a village wedding. They were drinking and dancing. The first person who became aware of my presence was precisely handsome Lawrence.

"Ah! Father Tournache," cried he, with a fine, clear, strong voice, which rose above all the others, "a traveller! serve him. Because there is a merry-making at your house, you must not neglect those who have a right to stay there. Come, monsieur," added he, giving me his chair; "there is no longer a seat anywhere. Take mine, I am going to dance a *bourrée* in the barn, and on my way out I will tell them to wait on you."

"I wish to disturb no one," rejoined I, touched by his politeness, but not much attracted by the appearance and odor of the feast. "I came to ask a direction."

"Can they give it to you?"

"You probably better than any one else. I would like to know on which side and at what distance are the rock and cascade of the Volpie?"

"Very well, come with me. I will give you an idea."

As, this time, despite his courtesy and obliging spirit, the fine fellow seemed to me a little tipsy, I followed him, rather from politeness, than in the hope of receiving a very lucid explanation.

"Stay," said he, after having conducted me, somewhat unsteadily, about ten steps from the little house; "you see that long, uniform hill, which cuts off the horizon? It is higher than it looks; it is really a

mountain, that takes an hour's walk to climb it. Now, do you see a sort of slanting gap at the highest point, just above the point of the village spire? It is there."

"I confess that I see nothing. Night is approaching, and to-morrow I should have, perhaps, some difficulty in finding my way."

"I was about to propose my company to you for the day after, since I think of going there; but to-morrow, it is too soon."

"I regret it."

"So do I; but what can we do? I absolutely must get drunk to-night, and it is probable that I shall sleep all day to-morrow."

"It is an urgent necessity that you get drunk?"

"Yes, I could not do otherwise than drink a little to celebrate the wedding of a playmate of my childhood. In quarter of an hour, if I left off there, I should be sad; with me the first stage is always clear and reasonable. I like better to finish off, grow gay, tender, mad, and idiotic; after that, one sleeps, and there's an end of it."

"There is no harm in becoming gay, tender, mad, and even idiotic, as you anticipate; but sometimes, beneath the influence of wine, one becomes wicked. You are not afraid of that, then?"

"No; I am convinced that wine, when it is not drugged, develops and reveals in us only the qualities and defects that exist there. I am not wicked, I do not drink absinthe. I am sure of myself."

"That is fortunate. But you spoke of dancing?"

"Yes, dancing intoxicates too. The great bagpipe which brays out in your ears, the motion, the heat, the dust, all that is charming. Come!"

While thus speaking he had an accent of sadness, almost of despair, in which I fancied I perceived the revelation of some secret grief or of some bitter remorse. The words of my hostess recurred to me, and I was seized with a feeling of pity for this man, who was so handsome, who expressed himself so well, and who appeared so amiable and frank.

"Why not, instead of 'finishing off' so quickly," said I, "remain here a little longer, and smoke a good cigar with me?"

"No, I should grow melancholy, and should bore you."

"That is my concern, I believe?"

"Mine also. Stay, I see plainly that you are a well-bred man, and that it would be pleasant to converse with you. Do not visit the Volpie until day after to-morrow."

"Do me the favor to come there to-morrow, and not to get intoxicated to-night."

"Ah! you seem to be interested in me? Do you know me?"

"I see you to-day for the first time."

"Truly? I know that you are the inspector of finance, who has been staying for the last two days at Mother Ouchafol's. You go about the province for four months every year. You have met me nowhere?"

"Nowhere. You are then known away from here?"

"I travelled over almost every part of France, for three years. Tell

me why you advise me not to drink."

"Because I have no fondness either for soiled things or deteriorated men. Mere matter of order and propriety, that is all."

He reflected a moment, then asked me my age.

"About the same as yours, — thirty years."

"No, I am twenty-six. I have the appearance of being thirty then?"

"I see you indistinctly in the twilight."

He replied sadly:—

"No, on the contrary, I believe that you see truly. I have lost four years of my life, since my face has four years too many. I will not commit an excess to-night, and, if you will go to the Volpie to-morrow, I will knock on your door at four o'clock in the morning. The collector has spoken to me of you. He says that you are a charming man."

"Thanks. I count upon you."

"Would you like to see the true *bourrée* of Auvergne danced before you go?"

"I will even dance it with you, if they will permit me."

"They will be delighted, but I must present you as my friend."

"Very well! It is not impossible that I become so."

"I accept the omen."

He pleased me; I could not help it; and, whatever might be the "frightful misconduct" with which the hostess of the Grand Monarque had reproached him, the curiosity which he aroused in me was almost sympathy.

In the barn, where he introduced

me, and where the noise, the dust, and the heat, predicted by him, left nothing to desire, I was received with much cordiality, and invited to drink freely.

"No, no," cried Lawrence, "he does not drink, but he dances. Stay, friend, be my *vis-à-vis*."

He had invited the bride; I invited the tall, ugly girl that I had seen upon his arm, an hour before. I thought to excite no jealousy, but soon perceived that she was greatly sought after, perhaps on account of her bold and sprightly air, perhaps for the sake of her wit. I had wished to make her talk of Lawrence; the hubbub, which was, so to speak, suffocating, did not allow me to engage in continued conversation.

Lawrence was dancing opposite me, and certainly he threw something of coquetry into it. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat, like the others. His shirt, still irreproachably white, outlined his fine figure, his broad shoulders, and his full chest; perspiration made his thick jet-black hair curl more closely; his eyes, heavy but a moment before, flashed fire. He had the grace inseparable from beautiful outlines and finely attached muscles; and although he danced the classic *bourrée* like a true peasant, he converted this dull and monotonous thing into a characteristic dance, full of animation and plastic art. Some intoxication certainly lingered in his legs; but in a few moments this unsteadiness disappeared, and it seemed to me that he was anxious to display himself before me in all his physical advantages, to dispel the bad opinion

with which he might have inspired me at first sight.

While conjecturing for what purpose he had travelled throughout nearly all of France, it occurred to me that he might have been a model. When he returned to the tavern, whither I accompanied him, and where they called upon him to sing, I was persuaded that he had been a strolling singer. But his voice was fresh, and he rendered the country songs with a charming simplicity which bespoke the artist, and not the cross-roads performer.

Gradually my ideas about him grew confused. I was warm, and I had accepted without distrust several bumpers of a pale-colored wine, which looked very innocent, but which was in reality remarkably heady. I felt that, if I did not wish to set a bad example to the very one whom I had just been lecturing, and if I did not wish to be accused by Madame Ouchafol of some "frightful misconduct," I must escape from the convivialities of these worthy peasants. So I slipped off adroitly, and on my way to the town had the mortification of perceiving that my gait was a trifle unsteady, that I saw the telegraph-posts double, and that I felt a most unusual desire to laugh and sing.

In proportion as I fancied I approached the town the trouble increased. My feet grew heavy, and, when I had walked a little longer than seemed necessary, I ascertained that the town had left the hill, or I had left the road to the town. Charming predicament for a public functionary, and especially for one

of the soberest of men, who had never in his life been overcome by wine!

I thought — for my brain remained perfectly clear — that this intoxication had come on too quickly not to pass away as soon. I resolved to wait until it had vanished; and catching sight of an open hovel which seemed untenanted, I entered it and threw myself upon a heap of straw, without particularly noticing the neighborhood of an ass, who was sleeping in an upright position, his nose in the empty rack. ✚

I followed his example; I slept a sleep as peaceful as his own. When I awoke it was daybreak; the ass was still asleep, although his legs moved restlessly, and he clinked his chain from time to time. I had some trouble in recalling how I came in such a place and in such company. At length memory returned. I arose, shook my clothes, smoothed my hair, and, finding that I had not lost my hat, recovered a portion of my self-respect. Then, feeling perfectly sobered, I regained without difficulty the way to the hotel of the Grand Monarque, telling myself that Madame Ouchafol would not fail to attribute my tardy return to some piece of good fortune. I had just time to make my toilet and swallow a cup of coffee; punctually at four o'clock handsome Lawrence knocked at my door. He had not slept; he had danced and sung all night: but he had not been intoxicated; he had kept his word. On leaving the wedding he had thrown himself into the river; this bath had refreshed and rested him: he prided

himself on swimming and diving like a duck. He was gay, lively, superbly handsome, and looked four years younger. I sincerely complimented him upon it, unable meanwhile to overcome the confusion which took possession of me when he remarked that my bed was not tumbled. Shame! I dared to answer that I had worked all night; happily the ass, sole witness of my disgrace, was incapable of revealing it.

Lawrence had eaten supper at two o'clock in the morning; he was neither hungry nor thirsty. For all baggage he had provided himself with a stick and a sketch-book, which he permitted me to look over. He drew very well, reproducing nature with boldness and fidelity. We crossed the fields, and soon ascended the long mountain by a path which, though steep, was delightful in its scenery and shadows.

Conversation really began only when we had reached the rugged crags where the Volpie plunges down and loses itself in a deep and angular abyss. It is a very beautiful little thing, difficult to approach for a good view.

We remained there some hours, and it was there that Lawrence revealed to me the *fearful mystery* of his existence.

I omit the conversation which gradually led to this confidence. He frankly confessed that he had felt for a long time a desire to open his heart to a man of sufficient liberality and culture to understand him. He fancied that I was such a man. I promised that he should not repent it, and he spoke as follows:—

STORY OF A ROLLING STONE.

I know that I am handsome; not only have I heard it said, but it has been said to me under circumstances which I shall never forget. Besides, I possess enough artistic cultivation to know what constitutes beauty, and I know that I am endowed with all the requisite qualities.

You will soon do justice to the lack of vanity with which it inspires me when you learn that it is the source of my greatest grief. I loved a woman who rejected me because I was not ugly.

You know that my name is Pierre Lawrence, and that I am the son of a peasant of this vicinity, now a nurseryman and kitchen-gardener. My father is the best of men, absolutely uneducated, which does not prevent me from adoring his goodness and amiability. My uncle is Baron Lawrence, a parvenu ennobled by Louis Philippe, and enriched by industry. He resides in Normandy in a fine old château, where I once visited him in my vacation, by the order of my father, who trusted to his remembrance and his promises. I know not whether he is selfish, whether he scorns the humble stock from which he sprang, or whether I had not the luck to please him. It is true that, leaving college imbued with new ideas, and afflicted with an ungovernable pride, I must have let him see that I did not come to him of myself, that I would sooner die than share his opinions and covet his property. In short, he asked me if I needed anything; I answered loftily that I needed noth-

ing. He told me that I was a handsome lad because I resembled him, that he was glad to see me, and that he was going away to urge on his nomination as deputy. I returned to Paris, without unlocking my valise. That was seven years ago; I have never seen him since; I have never written to him. I am very sure that he will disinherit me; he is a bachelor, but he has a housekeeper. I bear him no ill-will on that account. I know that, save for his devotion to all the powers, he is a very worthy man, properly charitable. He owes me nothing. I have not the least reproach to bring against him. He earned his fortune himself; he is free to dispose of it to his liking.

My father does not take the thing so philosophically. If he made sacrifices for my education, it was in the hope that I should be a gentleman. That is not my fault. I asked no better than to be a peasant. I was happy in our humble station, and I always returned to it with regrets that I must leave it. My only pleasure now is to water the flowers and vegetables of our enclosure, to prune the trees, to wheel the barrow, and to force my old father to take a little rest.

I love the companions of my childhood. Their rustic fashions are far from distasteful to me; as far as I can shake off my troubles, it is with them that I attempt it. Singing and dancing, working and chatting, with these good people, these are my chief amusements. I abuse my strength a little; as much as I would wish to preserve it, to press on in pursuit of my dream, so much I

would wish to exhaust it, in order to forget it.

Everybody can tell you in the country hereabouts that I am very good-natured, very faithful, very discreet, and very devoted. Only, the bourgeois reproach me with having no ambition and no profession; as if it were not one to till the ground!

My father is very well off, according to his wants. He has twenty thousand francs invested, and I have never made him pay the smallest debt. As for me, I had inherited ten thousand francs from my mother. I have made way with nearly all of it.

After having passed my baccalaureate examination at Paris, and paid my respects to my uncle in Normandy, I came back here to ask my father what he wished me to do.

"You must return to Paris," he told me, "and become an advocate or magistrate there. You speak easily, you cannot fail to become a *great speaker*. Study law. I know that you will need ten thousand francs to live some years there. I will sell half my property. If I come to want when I am old, you will see that I do not lack for bread."

I refused my father's offer. I sacrificed my personal inheritance alone. He consented to it, and I went back to Paris, resolved to study hard, and to become a *great speaker*, to gratify my father, a little, also, for my own satisfaction. I know not what natural instinct impelled me to display myself, to extend or round my strong and flexible arms, to please myself with the sound of my powerful voice. How shall I explain it? A sort of exhibition of my natural

advantages seemed to me like a duty or a right, I know not which ; but the ambition was not for nothing, as you will see.

There was still a Latin Quarter at this period. The students had not passed the Seine. They did not associate with young ladies ; they still danced with grisettes, a species already beginning to disappear, and which since then has disappeared. That was in the beginning of 1848.

My constitution was too strong for me to fear to plunge boldly into work and pleasure. I speedily had friends. A strong, bold lad, generous and affectionate, good-tempered and noisy, always gathers a troop about him. We took part in every disturbance at ball or theatre, at the races or in the street.

I will not relate to you my adventures and my scrapes during the first year. I returned to the country for the holidays. I had studied well, and not spent too much. My father was in ecstasies with me, and said, "The Baron will be delighted."

My comrades in the faubourg were pleased with me, because I turned peasant again with them. The following winter, after the reopening of the school, a woman decided my life.

We attended all the first performances at the Odéon. We made a great noise over both those plays which we wished to support and those which we disliked. There was at that time a little actress at this theatre, who was styled *Impéria* on the poster. She played unnoticed, in what was called the *répertoire*. She was wonderfully pretty, ladylike, and cold,

either by nature, or from inexperience or timidity ; the public did not trouble themselves about her. At that time one might play, for ten years, Molière's *Isabelles* or *Lucindes*, and the secondary rôles of tragedy, without attracting the public attention, or obtaining the least promotion, unless through influential protection.

This young girl had no acquaintance in the Ministry, no friend in the press ; she did not even solicit the sympathy of the public. She spoke well ; she had a modest grace ; one perceived in her the conscientiousness of an artist, but no inspiration, no fervor, and not the shadow of coquetry. Her eyes never questioned the proscenium, and when, in obedience to the effect of her rôle, she cast them down, she did not let fall upon the orchestra that veiled and wanton glance, which seems to say, "I know very well what my rôle seems not to know."

I could not tell why, after having seen her with indifference in several minor parts, I was so struck by her proud and modest face, that between the acts I asked my companions if they did not think her charming. They pronounced her pretty, but not attractive on the stage. One of them had seen her play *Agnès* ; he pretended that she had totally misunderstood this classical creation, and a discussion ensued. Was *Agnès* a sly-boots who assumes innocence, or a veritable child who says very forward things without fathoming their meaning ? I supported the latter opinion ; and although I cared little to be right, the first time that *L'École des Femmes* appeared upon the play-

bills I left the *café Molière* to see the piece. I don't know why I hesitated to mention it to any one. The students never listen to the repertory, which is nevertheless imposed upon them, in view of their instruction, at the *Second Théâtre-Français*. We are all supposed to know the classics by heart, and many declare themselves satiated with this antique feast who know only short fragments of it, and have never understood its wit or appreciated its merit.

I was like many others in this respect, and, at the end of several scenes, I felt almost a remorse for never having duly valued so admirable a masterpiece. We are romantic no longer; we are too sceptical for that; yet romanticism has penetrated into the air which we breathe; we have preserved its unjust and arrogant side, and we despise the classics, without rendering more justice to those which have superseded them.

In proportion as I relished the profound and humorous work of the old master, I was struck with the charm of the cruel *Agnès*: I say cruel, because *Arnolphe* is certainly an unhappy character, interesting in spite of his folly; he loves and is not loved in return! He is selfish in love; he is man. His suffering finds vent by snatches in admirable verses, which have, whatever they may say, an echo in the heart of every lover. In nearly all the plays of *Molière* there is a depth of heart-rending grief, which at a given moment effaces the absurdity of the jealous dupe. The stupid public does not suspect it. The actors who study their rôles are struck by it, and this deep shadow

troubles them; for if they obey the shadow's tearful sense, the stupid public comprehends nothing of it, fancies they parody the suffering, and laughs still more heartily. In the midst of this coarse laughter there are very few who whisper in their neighbor's ear that *Molière* is a wounded eagle, a soul profoundly sad. Nevertheless he is so, for I also have studied him, and in all his jealous husbands I perceive the misanthrope. *Arnolphe* is a humble *Alceste*, *Agnès* a rustic *Célimène*.

But *Mademoiselle Impéria* rendered *Agnès* interesting by the absolute good faith of her innocence, by certain accents not so much plaintive as energetic and indignant at oppression. While questioning if she were in the right, it was impossible not to be impressed and swayed by her face and attitude. That night I dreamed of her; the next day, under pretext of looking for old books, I walked along the galleries of the *Odéon*, always returning to the little trellised gate, where the employees of the theatre and the artists attending rehearsal go in and out: but in vain I watched and waited; they were rehearsing a new play in which *Impéria* had no part. All that I could gather from the words of those who came and went was that she was summoned to attend the rehearsal on the following day, the actress who played the part of *Ingénue* being indisposed and likely to be ill the day of the first performance. An urchin made his appearance, carrying a bulletin for her, and, as he held this little paper in the ends of his fingers, with an absent air, I followed him

with treacherous intent; I feigned to be abstracted as he; I jostled against him at the moment when he slipped past the coaches stationed by the theatre. The paper fell, I picked it up and returned it to him, after having wiped it on my sleeve, although it was not soiled. I had had time to read the address: "Mademoiselle Impéria, Rue Carnot, No. 17."

When the boy was setting off again I had a mind to give him five francs, and do the errand in his stead. I dared not.

Besides, I was intoxicated with my discovery as with a triumph. The first thing that a simple lover dreams of, is to know the address of his ideal, as if that brought him one step nearer to success!

However, I followed the little messenger at a distance. I saw him enter at No. 17, one of the poorest houses of this poor street, which was neither paved nor lighted with gas. I redoubled my steps, and met him as he came out, calling to the porter to deliver the note as soon as Mademoiselle What's-her-name returned.

Mademoiselle What's-her-name! Profanation! I knew nothing of that freedom which invariably characterizes the theatre, even serious theatres. I grew bolder; she was not there. I could learn something of her from the *concierge*. I entered resolutely under a sombre peristyle, and, in my turn, asked for Mademoiselle Impéria through the window.

"Out," brusquely replied a fat old woman.

"When will she return?"

"I don't know."

And scanning me from head to foot with a half-contemptuous, half-good-humored air, she added, —

"Have you her permission to visit her?"

"Certainly," I answered, wretchedly disconcerted.

"Let us see!" rejoined the old woman, extending her hand.

I was about to withdraw; she detained me, saying, —

"Hark you, my young friend, you are one of those pretty fellows who fancy they have only to show themselves; they come every day, and that annoys this young actress, who is discreet as an angel. We are directed to tell these fine gentlemen that she receives no one. So don't take the trouble to come again; good evening, and success to you."

Laughing maliciously, she raised again with a loud slam the blind that she had let down to speak to me.

I retired, mortified and enchanted. Impéria was virtuous, innocent perhaps, as she appeared. I no longer laughed at myself for my fancy; I clung to it as to my life.

I will not tell you all the schemes that I devised to gain admittance to the theatre the next day. I dared not; but, the day after, seeing many people of every sort going in and out at this little entrance, which did not seem to be guarded, and which is never closed, I pushed on boldly and passed a tiny porter's box, of which a child had charge. I had seized the moment when two workmen were entering. I followed close upon their heels; the child, who was playing with a cat, hearing steps and

voices that he knew, did not even raise his eyes in my direction.

The workmen who preceded me ascended five or six steps, made a half-turn to the right, went up two or three steps more, which ended the principal staircase, pushed open a heavy swing-door, and disappeared. I stopped a moment irresolute. The child perceived me then, and cried out, —

“Whom do you want?”

“Monsieur Eugène!” replied I, entirely at random, and not knowing why this name rose to my lips rather than any other.

“Don’t know him,” replied the little fellow. “It is perhaps M. Constant that you mean?”

“Yes, yes, beg pardon! That’s it! M. Constant.”

“Go straight ahead!”

And he returned to his cat, whose face he was carefully cleaning with a woman’s cap, probably his mother’s.

What should I say to M. Constant, and who was M. Constant? I prepared to follow the workmen through the swing-door.

“Not that way!” cried the child again; “that is the stage!”

“I know that well enough, found it!” replied I in an angry voice. “I have business there first.”

He was nonplussed by my audacity. With two strides I gained the stage, attracted by the reassuring darkness which I had perceived there, and in which it took me some moments to make sure of my whereabouts.

I was at the back of the stage, and my first movement was to slip behind a curtain — which I shall always

remember it — represented a strip of garden with enormous hydrangeas that I took at first for pumpkins. I stood there, palpitating and undecided, until my two machinists, passing close to me, and taking up two ropes with pulleys, said to me, —

“If you please, monsieur, step aside! make way for the *plantation*!”

They took away my refuge and my shelter. Two others, working in a contrary direction, uncoiled the roll which was to replace the garden by the back part of a room, and these cried to me in their turn, —

“Room for the *plantation*!”

The *plantation*! what did that mean? A guilty mind believes readily in direct allusions. I recalled the sign over the paternal enclosure: *Plantation of Thomas Lawrence*! and I imagined they were laughing at me. It was not so, however. The *plantation* at the theatre consists in placing curtains and whatever pieces of scenery are used at the rehearsal to show the arrangement of the scenery represented in the play, and to regulate the entrances and exits of the characters. If the scenery in the play is to be changed, the machinists, after each act of the rehearsal, alter or modify the *plantation*.

I took refuge on a great wooden staircase which ascended to the back of the stage behind the scenery, and I ventured to gain the platform above. I found myself face to face with a hairdresser who was combing a splendid peruke in the style of

Louis XIV., and who paid no attention to me. A voice issuing, I knew not whence, cried, —

“Constant!”

The hairdresser did not stir. It was not he. I breathed again.

“Constant!” cried another voice.

And some one opened at my right the padded door of a room furnished with red benches, which I judged to be the actors’ green-room. The hairdresser moved then, for the person who appeared, and whom I dared not look at, seemed invested with the supreme authority.

“Monsieur Jourdain,” said the artist in hair, “Constant is in that direction.”

And turning to the left, he began calling in his turn, —

“Constant! The manager wants you.”

I was caught between two fires, — the manager in person on one side, on the other this fantastic personage Constant, with whom I had pretended I wished to speak, and with whom I had not the least acquaintance. I retreated by the way I had come, and keeping always in the shadow, I precipitated myself into the left side-scene, where I tumbled over a fireman in undress uniform, who said to me with an oath, —

“Take care! Are you blind?”

As I very politely begged his pardon, and as he was concerned only in guarding against the danger of fire, he had no hesitation in telling me where I could find a refuge without troubling any one. He showed me a sort of flying bridge which descended from the stage to the orchestra, and which I cleared with

one leap, although it was very insecure.

The hall was as gloomy as the stage; I tried to sit down, and finding myself very uncomfortable, I ascertained that the seats in the stalls were tipped back, and that great bands of green cloth were stretched over the whole range of the orchestra. And then they illuminated something on the stage; several persons descended the flying staircase, and came towards me. I slipped away again. I reached the lobbies on the ground-floor, and catching sight of an open box, I crouched down there and kept still. There, unless by a fit of coughing or an unwary sneeze, I could not be discovered.

But how did that benefit me? In the first place, Impéria was not at rehearsal; her companion, the leading one in that line of character, was recovered, and performed her part without any prospect of being superseded. Impéria, her duties as substitute over, must be in the hall, studying the general effect, and listening to the suggestions that the author and the manager were making to the *ingénue*. But how distinguish and recognize any one in this immense hall, nearly empty and lighted only by three Argand lamps fastened to posts placed on the stage, and casting a greenish light with great shadows over the surrounding objects? This dim and smoky light, which a sharp ray of sunshine, falling from the frieze upon a projecting corner of the scenery, rendered still more deceptive, did not penetrate at all into the interior of the house.

The entire audience was composed of a dozen persons seated in the orchestra and with their backs to me. These were, perhaps, the manager, the costumer, the leader of the *claque*, one of the physicians; in short, people connected with the establishment, artists or employees, besides three or four women, one of whom must be the object of my aspirations; but how approach her? Certainly, strangers to the theatre were forbidden to intrude at the rehearsals, and I could not, without falsehood, claim acquaintance with any one; besides, my falsehood easily detected, I should be shamefully expelled, without having a right to demand any ceremony about it.

From time to time a noise of sweeping, shaking of carpets, and slamming of doors issued from the upper part of the hall. One of the persons seated in the orchestra cried: "Hush! silence!" and turning around seemed to examine everything with a piercing and angry glance that I fancied I felt falling on myself. I shrank up together; I held my breath. I dared not go out for fear of betraying my presence. At last this Cerberus, the manager, arose, interrupted the rehearsal, and declared that the clearing of the boxes and galleries must take place either before or after the rehearsals, since it was impossible to perform in the midst of this uproar and disturbance. Thus my last hope was taken from me, for I had conceived the idea of bribing one of these minor employees, and taking his place myself next day.

Another idea passed through my mind. Was it impossible to present myself as an actor? What I had witnessed of the rehearsal showed me how little the artist takes the initiative, and how his work is cut out for him. I had not the least idea of what is called the *mise en scène*, and the generality of spectators are quite as ignorant. They fancy, simply, that this admirable order, this dexterity of movement, this sureness of encounter, which are established on the stage, and which permit the interchange of cues, without apparent premeditation, are spontaneous effects, due to the intelligence of the actors or to the sequence of the scenes. That is not the case, however. Either ordinary actors lack intelligence, or they have too much, or they cannot bring out their points, or they are much occupied with producing an effect, and to that end willingly sacrifice probability of attitude and situation on the part of the other characters. This *mise en scène* is like military rule, which regulates the carriage, gesture, and face of each, even the most insignificant. One could chalk out upon the boards the space where each may move at a given moment, the number of steps which he must take, measure the extension of his arm in certain gestures, determine the exact place where an object is to fall, outline the *posé* of the body in the fictions of sleep, fainting, or falling in burlesque or dramatic performance. All this is regulated in the classic repertory by absolute traditions. In new productions these things demand long trials, experiments that are re-

jected or insisted on; hence ensue occasional stormy discussions, when the author, as a last resort, is chosen umpire, at the risk of committing an error, if he lacks judgment, taste, and experience. The actors—at least such as derive a certain authority from talent—join in the argument; they rebel against just or unjust exigencies. The inferior artists have no voice; they suffer and are silent. If they are awkward and ungraceful, effects which had been thought advisable have to be sacrificed, and what natural abilities they may possess turned to account; still, it is necessary to determine the use of these abilities, for they must change nothing during a hundred representations. The actor who improvises in performance runs a risk of killing the play: he disconcerts all his fellow-actors. They are put out, not only by an additional word, but by an unexpected gesture, an unlooked-for attitude. So the *mise en scène* is a collective operation; the actor has no more freedom in it than the soldier in his drill.

Perceiving this, I thought that the profession could certainly be learned very quickly, without special study or talent, since throughout you are taught and prompted; for I noticed also that they dictated and emphasized the intonations, syllable by syllable, to beginners, and even to those of more experience, when they mistook the meaning of a passage.

"Why," said I to myself, "should I not submit to this apprenticeship, even should it lead me to nothing beyond the happiness of approaching

her whom I love? I will make the attempt."

When my resolution was taken, I felt more comfortable in my concealment. Illusion gains ground readily in a mind of twenty. It already seemed to me as if I were a member of the company, belonged to the house, and had a right to be where I was.

When a project has entered my head, I have no rest until I have set about its execution. The rehearsal of the second act was finished; they left off there. A loud argument went on between the stage and the orchestra stalls upon the necessity of repeating these two acts next day, or beginning on the third. The manager rose, and turned toward the flying bridge to reascend the stage.

I seized this moment to quit my box, and spring coolly toward the entrance of the orchestra. I reached it at the same time with three women: one was tall and thin; another old and stout; the third was young, but it was not Impéria. So I had no other emotion to fear than that of contending with authority. I went back to the stage, and mingled boldly in a group surrounding the author and the manager. The latter insisted upon the necessity of cutting out a portion of the play. The author, crestfallen, consented unwillingly.

"Come into my study," said the manager, "we will arrange it at once."

In my great confusion I had not thought of recognizing this manager; everybody knew him, however; it was Bocage, the great actor Bocage himself. Since I was new to Paris, I had never seen him play, but his

noble figure was like one of the monuments of the place, and it needed but to be a student to love Bocage. He allowed us to sing the Marseillaise between the acts; and when we called for it, the orchestra gave it to us unhesitatingly. This continued till the day when the Marseillaise was decreed rebellious. Bocage resisted, and was removed.

The sight of him inspired me with an heroic courage. There was not a moment to lose. I approached him resolutely.

"What do you wish with me, sir?" asked he, with polite bluntness.

"I would like to speak to you five minutes."

"Five minutes! that's a long time, I can't spare it."

"Three minutes! two!"

"And one has passed already. Wait for me a quarter of an hour, in the green-room."

He went out and I heard him saying, "Constant, who is that tall fellow that you have admitted to the stage?"

"A tall fellow?" repeated Constant, who was in fact the *concierge factotum* of the Odéon.

"Yes, a very handsome fellow."

"Upon my word, I know nothing about it. Who let him in?"

"Say it was I," called out the leading young comedian, the Frontin of the troupe, as he passed by me with a careless air.

He came into the green-room. Bocage had only crossed it. Constant, summoned and beset by five or six other persons, and replying to their demands and questions with the coolness of a man accustomed to

live in a tumult, went out by another door. For one moment I found myself alone with the comedian adored by the public.

"May I really," said I to him, "make use of your name?"

"The deuse!" cried he, without noticing me. And he vanished, calling to the hair-dresser: "My wig, Thomas, my wig for this evening!"

I was left alone in a low, oblong apartment, adorned with portraits of authors and celebrated actors, but taking heed of nothing, and counting the beatings of my agitated heart. When the clock struck five, I had waited three quarters of an hour. The movements and noises in the theatre died gradually away; every one had gone to dinner. I dared not move a step; the manager had surely forgotten me.

At last Constant reappeared, napkin in hand. He had remembered me in the midst of his meal, the excellent man!

"M. Bocage is still there," he said; "will you speak to him?"

"Certainly," replied I.

And he conducted me into one of the director's studies, where I found myself in the presence of Bocage. The great artist looked at me with a kindly glance which did not lack penetration, showed me a seat, begged me to wait a moment, gave five or six orders to Constant in less than a minute, wrote a few lines on half a dozen sheets of paper, and, when we were alone, asked me what I wished, in a tone which, although very pleasant, indicated "Make haste."

"I would like to enter the theatre." He regarded me again.

"You certainly would not make a bad figure there. A fine young *premier*! From whom do you come?"

"I have no recommendation."

"Then you are not from the Conservatory?"

"No, monsieur, I am a law student."

"And you wish to forsake a career where your relatives doubtless —"

"I do not mean to leave it, Monsieur Bocage; I am an industrious student, although I love pleasure. I count on pursuing my studies and being received as an advocate; after that I shall see."

"You think, then, that one needs no special study to prepare for the stage?"

"I have tried none. I can, however, attempt it."

"Then do so, and come to see me again. I can judge at present only of your exterior."

"Is it sufficient?"

"More than sufficient. The voice is fine, the pronunciation excellent. You appear easy in your movements."

"Is that all that is necessary?"

"O no, certainly not! You must study. I engage you to begin."

"Since you are so good, so patient, as to grant me a moment's attention, tell me what I must do?"

He considered a moment, and replied, "You must see a great deal of acting. Do you attend the theatres?"

"About like the other students."

"That is not enough. Stay, your face pleases me, but I don't know you. Bring me proof to-morrow that you are a very well-behaved lad, and you shall have your entrances, not only into the house, but also to the stage,

that you may follow the performance of the repertory; that is all I can do for you at present. I need not tell you that if you lack discretion and propriety in the relations which may be established between yourself, the artists, and the employees, I cannot prevent your being immediately put out."

"I will bring you proof to-morrow that you have nothing to fear. I should be a wretch, if I made you repent of your kindness to me!"

He felt the sincerity of my emotion; tears of joy and gratitude trembled on my eyelashes. He extended his hand to me, and took his hat, saying, "To-morrow, at this same hour."

I hastened at once in search of everybody with whom I was acquainted. Without revealing to them my love for an actress, I told them that I could obtain admission to the theatre, if they would give a good account of me. In two hours I had a list of more than twenty signatures. My landlord, my tailor, my shoemaker, and my hatter attested with equal enthusiasm that I was a *charming young man, irreproachable in every respect*. My comrades did still better. They insisted on accompanying me, the student-card in their hats, to the manager's. They were not admitted; Constant was on guard; but Bocage saw them from the window, smiled at them in reply to their salutations, and signed my complete admission into the establishment. It was a great favor, granted to a few young actors only, and as yet I was nothing.

That same evening I attended the

performance. Alas ! Impéria did not play till Friday ; but I resolved to strike up a friendship with the actors of my age, and gain a footing in the green-room, to be sure of meeting her there.

Naturally enough, I went to thank the young comedian for the protection he had offered me. He knew my adventure already. He had seen the sort of ovation that had recommended me to the confidence of Bocage. He presented me to his comrades as a *warranted candidate*, fired off a thousand dazzling witticisms, and left me nonplussed at this theatrical brilliancy, beside which the wit of students in their second year is still very dull, tame, and provincial.

By the end of three days I was quite at home there, save that I perceived all I lacked to be in tune with the spirit of the house. I realized that this position of supernumerary on tolerance gave me no right to take liberties. I shrank from deserving the least reproach on the part of a manager who had so generously opened the door to me. So I imposed upon myself a politeness and reserve so much the easier that, feeling my inferiority, I could not have shone in pleasantry. I must say, also, that generally the actors were people of good-breeding and polished manners ; without stiffness or affectation, they had the air of the best society, and it is certain that I learned still more from hearing them converse between the acts than from seeing them perform. Two or three had, however, a way of talking rather freely, but they refrained from it before the women : all knew how to

respect the stage, whatever might be their private manners elsewhere.

So I received there lessons in deportment, and that simplicity of manner which is the stamp of good-breeding. All these persons had learned by precept the customs of good society, and they would have appeared, in the highest circles, quite as fine gentlemen as on the stage. They had fallen into the habit of being so. There was no difference now, even in their moments of careless merriment, between the characters that they had just been representing and those they really were. I comprehended all I lacked to be a well-bred man ; love suggested to me the desire to please. I was almost glad not to have to meet the gaze of Impéria yet ; and, not to delay the metamorphosis which I had determined on, I left the smoking-room, I gave up billiards, I disappeared from the *Closerie*, and devoted all the time I did not spend at the theatre to my legal and literary studies. My friends complained of me ; they had never seen me so serious and orderly.

Friday came at last. During five days that I had been sure of meeting her, of speaking to her, perhaps, I had not once dared to utter Impéria's name, and, whether through chance or indifference, no one around me had made the least mention of her. Phèdre was on the programme ; Impéria's name was there also. She played Aricie. I had already learned to dress properly with my modest wardrobe. I passed an hour at my toilet. I looked at myself in the glass, like a woman. I asked myself

a hundred times if my face, which had pleased Bocage and Constant, might not displease her. I forgot my dinner. I passed under the galleries of the Odéon before the gas was lighted. I was in mortal fear, even while a delirious joy made me dizzy.

At last the hour arrived. I entered the green-room. No one there yet, but an old woman accompanying a tall slender girl clad in Greek costume, who looked at herself in the glass with a frightened air, and declared that she was going to faint. I bowed, and seated myself on a bench. I wondered if this dress and these white fillets were not the somewhat careful toilet of a supernumerary. CEnone arrived in her scarlet tunic, covered with a large fawn-colored peplum. She sat down in an arm-chair, her feet upon the fender, and exclaimed, —

“What infernal weather!”

The elder *tragediennes* frequently copy the dashing and military style of the Empire, which Mademoiselle Georges affected. Comedy imparts dignity to the deportment; tragedy, which deals with the superhuman, produces by reaction a desire to return as far as possible to reality.

The old woman in tartan, who accompanied the young Greek, made a deep reverence to CEnone, begging her to give a glance to her daughter's toilet.

“What!” cried the nurse of Phèdre, “does she act Aricie to-night?”

“For the first time, Madame Régine. She is very much afraid, my poor child! As for me, I tell her it is a lucky chance that Mademoiselle

Impéria is ill; were it not for that —”

“Impéria ill?” cries Theseus, entering; “so much the worse! Is it serious?”

“It would seem so!” replies the mother; “for Mademoiselle Impéria would not resign her part for a trifle.”

Hypolite enters in his turn.

“Did you know that little Impéria was ill?”

“I have just been told so. It would even appear that it is serious.”

“What then,” says CEnone; “what is the matter with the child?”

“There is the doctor,” says Thiramine; “what is the matter with our Aricie?”

“I fear a typhoid fever,” replies the doctor.

“The deuse! Poor little thing! It is too bad! Have you seen her to-day?”

“Two hours ago.”

“It must have come on suddenly, since we knew nothing of it,” continues CEnone.

“So suddenly,” says the mother of the new Aricie, “that my girl could not even have a rehearsal.”

“She thinks only of her daughter, that woman!” says CEnone, rising.

“As for me, I am greatly distressed. Impéria is poor, without family, without support of any kind, you know. I wager that there is not so much as a cat with her, and not twenty francs in her little purse! Gentlemen, ladies, we will club together between the acts, and as soon as I am dead I shall hasten to the invalid's. Who will come with me

to assist me in watching with her, if she is delirious?"

"I!" cried I, pale, and unable to contain myself longer.

"Who! you?" said Enone, regarding me with an air of astonishment.

"Ladies and gentlemen, they are beginning!" cried the call-boy, ringing his bell.

This sudden interruption warded off the attention that would otherwise have been attracted by my confusion and my despair. I ran to the house of Impéria. In the door-keeper's box there was only a deaf old man, who understood at last that I was inquiring for the young actress, and who replied to me, —

"It seems she is not very well: my wife is with her."

I sprang toward the staircase, calling out to him that I came from the physician at the theatre. He pointed to the back of the passage, and a half-opened door on the ground-floor. I passed through two small rooms, very poorly furnished, but exquisitely neat, which overlooked a bit of garden, and found myself face to face with the portress, to whom I repeated the lie I had just been telling her husband.

She recognized me directly, and said to me with a shake of her head, —

"Are you telling me another fib?"

"How should I know that Mademoiselle Impéria is ill, if I did not come from the theatre?"

"What is the physician's name?"

I gave it.

"I begin to believe you. After all, in her present state — Come in with me."

She opened the door which she had held half shut behind her, and I followed her; but when I stood within that chamber, where, oppressed with fever, the poor young actress lay sleeping on a child's bed, I was seized with fear and penitence. It seemed to me as if I were outraging a death-agony, and I dared neither to approach nor look at her.

"Ah well! feel her pulse!" said the good woman. "See if the fever increases. She is not conscious. Come!"

I must either feel her pulse, or renounce my physician's rôle. I must lift up this poor, helpless arm, and take in my own this little hand, burning with fever. Nothing more harmless than this examination, surely, but I was not a medical student; I could do nothing for her. I had no right to impose my devotion on her. If she should open her eyes and see her hand in that of a stranger, she so cold and shy, her illness would be augmented through my fault. While making these sad reflections, I looked mechanically at a photograph placed on the little table: it was the picture of a man neither young nor handsome, a relative, doubtless, perhaps her father. It seemed to me as if the refined and gentle face reproached me. I retreated from the bed, and decided to tell the truth to the young girl's humble guardian.

"I am not a physician!"

"Ah, you see! I suspected it!"

"But I am connected with the theatre, and I know that the artists are anxious about the loneliness of their young comrade, about her

poverty also. They are going to get up a collection, and one of the ladies proposes to watch with her. Having nothing to do this evening, and fearing lest you might be embarrassed, I bring you my share. I see that you are devoted to her, and your face tells me that you are good and honest. Let her want for nothing. Care for her as if she were your daughter; they will assist you. As for me, I will come again only when I am summoned; I have no right to offer my services."

"But you are in love with her, like so many others, are you not? It is not a crime. You, too, look good and honest. I will permit you to inquire for her at the lodge. That is all. You are too young for a husband: she will not have a lover; and it is not I who will counsel her to commit a folly. Come, retire and be tranquil. Whether they bring me money or not, whether they aid me or not, she shall be cared for like my daughter, as you say; it was very pretty, but it was unnecessary. Good by! Take back your money. I have some myself, if the little one needs it."

I dared not return to the theatre; I felt that I should be questioned and betray myself. In the state in which I had left poor Impéria, I could not assume a careless air, nor invent a fresh falsehood.

Besides, I was tired of lying, and I blushed at my artifices. Sincerity is the foundation of my character.

To reconcile my conscience and my love, I resolved in reality to devote myself to the stage. Hitherto I had not seriously weighed the question; now I no longer asked myself

if my love would be sufficiently lasting to lead me to marriage. This honest old woman, who had just put the case so simply to me, had touched the root of the matter. I was not, perhaps, too poor to marry a girl who had nothing, but I was too young to give her confidence in me. I had no profession; the theatre alone could furnish me with one offhand, if I knew how to turn to account my natural gifts. Only a few months might have to pass before I should be suitably remunerated; and even if I had to wait several years, what difference did it make, if Impéria loved me, and deigned to betroth herself to me?

I did not forget my father in the midst of my dream. The darling wish of this dear good man was to see me become a *fine speaker*. He meant by that, an advocate or deputy; the thing was not very clear in his mind: but he could have no prejudice against the theatre; he did not know what it was. I do not believe that he ever entered a playhouse in his life. I possessed an influence over him that grew stronger every year. I did not despair of making him understand that, when one is a fine speaker, it is sometimes better to recite the fine things that others have written, than to utter one's own folly.

Thus reflecting, I hurried through the neighboring quarter. I ran along the Rue Notre Dame des Champs, I traversed the garden of the Luxembourg, the Rue de l'Ouest, the Rue Vavin, and returned to the poor Rue Carnot, awaiting, in the shadow, the arrival of CEnone, and at ten o'clock

I saw her enter in company with another woman. These ladies, as later I became aware, knew Impéria very slightly; but they were kind-hearted. With very few exceptions, all actors are so. Whatever may be their faults, their passions, their vices even, they have a mutual charity and devotion that are admirable. I have reason to know that no other profession admits of such compassionate and brotherly love.

I passed the night in wandering about like a restless shade, through the wind and rain. Day had hardly dawned when I knocked timidly at No. 17. The door was opened to me at once, and I saw the good portress, who addressed me with a smile: "Already up? Come, you care a great deal for her, it would seem. Comfort yourself, for she is much better. She has recognized her companions, and the fever has left her. I have just been taking a nap, and am going back to her. Those ladies will come back again at noon."

"May I come and inquire at eleven?"

"Yes, but if she is out of danger, you will leave us in peace, won't you?"

I went away, and threw myself on my bed.

At eleven Madame Romajoux — that was the name of the portress — told me that the physician had been there. He had said, "It will be nothing serious; we need have no fear for her. Let her stay in for five or six days; that is all."

When I heard Madame Romajoux's name, I said to her, seizing a pretext to prolong the conversation,

that either she or her husband must be from Auvergne.

"So we are, both," replied she; "and you?"

"I am from Arvers."

"And we from Volvic; that is far enough. What is your name?"

I told her at random a name that was not mine.

"What are your parents?"

"They are peasants."

"Like us. But say, then, my countryman, you are of the same rank as we, and you aspire to this young lady?"

"She is an actress; I am studying for an actor; and I suppose she is not a prince's daughter."

"There's where you mistake. Perhaps there are princes in her family. She is a noble young lady."

"Whose name is?"

"I shall not tell you. She conceals her name. She works at the theatre and at home, to pay her father's board, who is — who is incurable and in destitution; but enough of this. You are drawing me out, and I ought not to tell you what she has confided to me. Come, forget this pretty girl. She is not for your handsome eyes, and I suppose that you might turn her from her duty. Would you be very proud of having made a precious little pearl fall into the gutter? If you have a heart, leave her in peace."

"I respect her so much that I beg you will not mention me to her."

"Have no fear! I do not wish to have her ruined, and I say nothing to her of all the money I refuse, and all the gallants I send away."

"Continue, my dear countrywo-

man, continue! you are an adorable woman."

She began to laugh; but the hour was approaching when the physician might surprise me there; so I withdrew, and went to the rehearsal. They had begun on the third act, and were changing the arrangement of the scenery. There was a respite of quarter of an hour for the actors.

"Ah! there he is!" cried Madame Régine, when she saw me enter the greenroom; "inform us, my young friend, how you came to know our Impéria."

"I! I do not know her," answered I. "I have never spoken a word to her."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"But you are in love with her?"

"Why so?"

"You offered to watch with her, as if you were her brother or — He blushes, gentlemen! See how he blushes!"

"One blushes easily, and for no special reason, at my age; particularly when questioned by a person of talent like yourself."

"Thanks, you are very polite: what next?"

"Next, next! You said before me that this young lady was poor, respectable, without family; you spoke of fever, of delirium. Her misfortune, and, more particularly, your devotion, touched, affected me. I volunteered, without thinking of the impropriety of my first impulse; and that is all."

She looked me in the face mischievously, and added: "Is it true

that you obtained admittance here to fit for the stage, on her account?"

I was sure of myself this time, and I replied in a manner to convince her.

The subject was dropped. They talked of Impéria; they esteemed her greatly, although, outside the theatre, they did not know her; but they appreciated her good-breeding, her deference to advice, her modesty and pride.

"Is it true, really true," asked some one, "that she is the star of purity that she seems?"

"I am certain of it," responded Madame Régine. "If you had seen that poor little house, so neat, so modest and retired! Besides, you know what Bellamare told us of his pupil?"

"Yes; she was seventeen when he brought her here, but she is eighteen now."

"Ah well, it's all the same," replied Régine. "Truly, I will not answer for it that when she is twenty —"

They were interrupted by the recommencement of the play, and they descended to the stage. I remained alone in the greenroom with the leader of the orchestra, an excellent and very intelligent man, who was reading over the manuscript of the first acts, to see where he should have to put some musical phrases. He was very kind and fatherly with me; I ventured to ask him who was this Bellamare, and, as this personage will play an important part in my narrative, I invite your attention to the details which were given me.

"Bellamare?" said the leader of

the orchestra ; " you have never heard of Bellamare ? He is a friend of the establishment, a former actor of ours. He played the comic rôles, and had a good deal of talent, but he spoke through his nose, and his voice was not equal to so large a stage. He met with great success in the provinces. Here the public tolerated him, but would not adopt him, so that after a few years he returned to the province with a troupe which he had recruited and trained according to his fancy. He has conducted his affairs, sometimes successfully, sometimes the reverse, but always with so much delicacy and generosity that he has acquired for himself a thorough respect ; and when he is sinking he invariably finds friendly and trusting hands to set him afloat again. He has continued on terms of friendship, with us all ; and every year, when we are closing, he comes to see us, in order to engage those artists who are out of employment, to go about the province with him. Those whom he cannot himself employ he advises, recommends, and finds occupation for them. Whoever comes from Bellamare is well received everywhere. In short, he is an authority and a celebrity in the profession. And now I think of it, what you had better do, when you have profited a little by what you see here, is to ask Bellamare to bring you out somewhere. If you can prevail on him to attach you to his company, you will find him a valuable adviser, a professor of the first order, in serious even more than in comic drama ; for if Nature has denied him in some respects, intellect has made up for it,

and he is perhaps the ablest master who exists. He sees at a glance all that can be done with a subject ; and when he procured an engagement for little Impéria here last year, he told the manager : ' She will be correct, but cold, this first year. I will take her again next vacation, and will return her better. The third year you would not let her go, and you will give her a salary of ten thousand francs.' "

" And meanwhile ? " said I.

" She earns eighteen hundred, which is very insufficient for a virtuous girl who has relatives to support ; but it is all a *débutante* can expect. Fortunately she is very courageous and very skilful. While learning her rôles, she makes beautiful thread-lace that the ladies buy very willingly. They know that she is poor ; and truly, although they may not be very straitlaced here, one cannot help admiring them. Of course they know this probably will not last, since poverty almost always ends by overcoming principle, that a day will come when the desire for rest and amusement will gain the victory."

" Unless some honorable artist comes forward to marry her."

" That is a possibility like any other. I wager now, that you would think of it, if you had a profession and were ten years older."

" Maestro," I said to him, " they pretend that youth is the finest period of life."

" It is a generally received opinion."

" For my part I think that opinion lacks common sense. At my

age, whenever one is supposed to form any plan whatever, everybody hastens to cry out, 'You are too young!'

And I left him, cursing my beautiful youth, swearing at the same time that I would attach myself to Bellamare as to an anchor.

Three days later, as I was entering this same greenroom, I trembled to see Impéria seated near the fire, awaiting the end of the second act of rehearsal, in order to take part in the third. The poor child still looked pale and worn. Her little cloak was very thin, and her shoes very wet. She dried them with a calm and indifferent air, her eyes fixed upon the coals, which were not burning very brightly. I summoned Constant to rekindle the fire. She thanked him, without perceiving that the motion had originated with me.

"Ah well," said Constant to her, "so you are better? Do you know that you are changed? Are n't you going out too soon?"

"I must do my duty, Monsieur Constant," she answered, in that pure and vibrant voice which thrilled me to the heart.

She took up her embroidery, and began to work at that marvellous lace that she made so quickly and so well. I watched her in profile, for I dared not move a step to look at her front face. She was ten times prettier by daylight than by gas-light. Her skin was of a lustrous delicacy; her long brown eyelashes caressed her cheeks; her beautiful bright chestnut hair was knotted upon her white, firm neck, where waved a cloud of tiny curls, escaped from their con-

finement. She was smaller than I had supposed, decidedly *petite*, but so well proportioned and so elegant in outline, that she had seemed much taller on the stage; her feet and hands, her pretty little mouth, were masterpieces.

I happened to cough, for I had almost caught a pleurisy from passing the night out of doors, during her fever. She turned around as if surprised, and as she returned my bow her eyes had a cold or distrustful expression that seemed to say, "What is this gentleman?" But her attention was not especially attracted by a new face more or less; she bent her eyes again upon her work, and I had no cause to hope that my confounded *handsome face* had struck her.

I took my courage in both hands, as the saying goes. I pretended to look at the portrait of Talma, hung on one side of the mantel-piece. I approached it, but I almost turned my back to it; and then I fancied she was about to leave her seat, in order to withdraw from my proximity. I did not wish to see her movement of retreat accomplished, and coughing again, this time to keep myself in countenance, I went out by the door which led to the stage. I was about to take a seat in the orchestra, when I heard M. Bocage say to the director, pointing to the *ingénue* who was rehearsing: "Léon, that little thing won't do at all; she is impossible! At the end of this act we must remove her. Impéria might not be more spirited, but she would not be awkward and vulgar. Is she not well yet?"

"I believe not."

"Make inquiries."

I ventured to say that Mademoiselle Impéria was in the greenroom.

"And why the devil does she stay there? — My dear boy," added he, addressing himself to me, "have the kindness to tell her that we desire her presence in her own interest."

I went with one bound from the stage to the greenroom. I performed my errand in so humble a manner, that she was astonished, and could not restrain a slight smile.

"Yes, monsieur," she replied, "I will have the *goodness* to obey."

She put her work into her pocket, and took a seat at the entrance of the orchestra. Bocage bowed to her, and she responded by a salutation at once dignified and respectful. Summoning me with another nod, he passed me his fur foot-warmer.

"That child is still unwell," he said to me; "give her that."

I almost knelt to place the fur beneath Impéria's feet. She thanked me with the ease of a woman accustomed to attention, and thanked the manager with another bow. She received this charity as a gracious princess receives the homage which is hers of right. I was struck by the calm and firm expression of her face; I was even awed by it. She had no need to study the other actors, to acquire noble and simple manners; she might have taught them all the lesson. How awkward and insignificant I felt before her!

While the *ingénue* was wading through the last scene in the act, the impatient manager, after exchanging a few words with the author, drew near Impéria.

"Notice what fault they find with your companion. The rôle is to be taken away from her. Be ready to rehearse it to-morrow."

Impéria made no reply, but a tear trickled over her cheek.

"Ah well, what is it?" asked the manager.

"O monsieur, I have never yet had to wound any one's feelings!"

"You must get used to that, my child; that is the way of the theatre!"

The next day she replaced Mademoiselle Corinne, who declared herself her implacable enemy.

The play went off better and more briskly. I observed that when they wished Impéria to add a little warmth to her unimpassioned acting, they always addressed her with extreme deference, and that in those passages which brought out her good qualities they gave her great encouragement. Evidently, they had a respect for her beyond her age and position. She owed it to her politeness and amiability, which awoke esteem and interest at the same time. In the greenroom, this secret influence was still more perceptible. Actors are children, sometimes rebellious, capricious, and passionate; but they are impressionable children, nice observers, most sensitive instruments, that a breath sets all a-quiver. Merciless and cruel in their condemnation, they yield equally to their enthusiasm; and it often happens that two irreconcilable enemies applaud each other rapturously, beneath the spell of a sincere admiration. They have the freedom of opinion which belongs to irresponsible vir-

taosos. The unconcern of their intellectual life vibrates between the extremes of generosity and cruelty. Obligated to speak whatever falls to their part, whether good or bad, so they yield to every feeling, infatuation as well as contempt.

Impéria was appreciated then; and when she was brought in contact with the company for the first time, in a new play, — always a source of great excitement, both for those who *are* in it and those who *wish to be*, — they were convinced of that purity of soul and nobility of nature which they had ascribed to her, but hitherto had had no opportunity of proving. They were interested in her, and constrained her to talk with them by addressing her as she deserved to be addressed; they took especial pains to become acquainted with her, and when she passed through the greenroom, in the midst of a rather excited discussion, the young Frontin would exclaim, "Hush, gentlemen, the angel is passing!"

At length, seeing her free from all suspicion, I dared to take part in the conversations carried on with her and the other women. I always addressed myself, however, to some one else. She was the last to whom I ventured to speak; but destiny drew me on, and, in spite of myself, my first words to her were a declaration.

They were discussing marriage, in connection with the publication of the banns of a young tragedian belonging to the company, who was about to marry a young and beautiful soubrette.

"They are right, these children," said one.

"Utter folly!" said another.

And as each one volunteered an opinion on the advantages and the cares of a family, my friend Frontin appealed to me.

"And the handsome supernumerary," said he, "the 'warranted aspirant,' what does he think of it?"

"O," replied I, "I am a child; I have the confidence of my age; I do not see why a man should not wed the woman he loves."

"That is very pretty," said Régine; "but since at your age he loves all women, he would have a great many marriages on his hands."

"At my age," replied I, desperately, addressing Impéria, who was smiling, "one loves but one woman —"

"At a time, perhaps!" responded Régine; "but, to a dead certainty, you take the first who passes under your nose for your ideal."

"The ideal? There is no such thing!" said the stout personage who played the financial rôles, addressing the logician.

The logician here put in a speech that seemed to be borrowed from his repertory. By dint of reasoning upon the stage, he had become very fluent. He affirmed that the ideal was a relative thing, which issued full-armed from the brain of every individual, the visible result of those allurements to which his temperament rendered him susceptible.

"I knew," said he, "a man of refined intellect, and exquisite appearance, whose ideal was a stout woman well versed in culinary matters. At

your age," added he, turning to me, "it is quite the contrary. Then one loves ethereal women, who live only on dew."

"Don't defend yourself," cried the young comedian, "a young *premier* should be like that. He must cut his bread in thin slices and dip it into a rosebud, for his breakfast, nothing delicate or perfumed enough for Lindor or Célio; also nothing less suited to the cares of a household. Hence you do not see *Cinthio del Sole* occupied in washing his little monkey's faces. No, the *access*, he who is always on fire with love, is too handsome, too nice, and too beribboned, to fall into the grease of the soup-pot! — What says the discreet Impéria?"

"What?" said Impéria, who had not been attending to the question; "of what are you speaking?"

"Regard the shepherd Paris, who contemplates you blushing," replied the comedian, pushing me before her. "How do you find him?"

"Very well bred, always!" answered Impéria, without raising her eyes to me. "That is all I know of monsieur."

"He is always so?" went on Frontin; "you could not say as much for me!"

"I have no more to complain of in you than in the others."

"She is a Jesuit! she detests me! Come, I will remodel myself! The aspirant shall give me lessons; he shall make me rehearse the morning salutation, the presentation of the arm-chair, the manner of picking up work that has fallen, and replacing the needle in it without breaking off

the point; for he knows how to do all those things, the sly boots!"

"I should know how to be still more devoted," I replied, "and in earnest perhaps!"

"Devote yourself even to the death, would you not?" rejoined Frontin with emphasis.

And as Impéria, surprised at last, regarded me with some attention, I repeated, "Even to the death," with an accent of passionate conviction that made her tremble slightly.

"The shot is fired!" cried Frontin; "the arrow is sped, straight to the heart!"

"To whose heart?" she asked, with a discouraging composure.

"To the only heart still free that I know of in the company."

"Mine? how do you know it, Monsieur ——?"

"Ah! it is not so; pardon! I did not suppose — They said — See how deceitful women are, and how the Agneses deceive you!"

"I am not an Agnes. No one tyrannizes over me."

"But Horace —"

"I know no Horace"

"Come!" exclaimed Régine, "tell us the truth, *petite*! You are virtuous; still, you are not a prude, and you have not reached eighteen without a preference for some one?"

I was ready to faint, and they commented on my pallor. Impéria had the implacable cruelty of virtue, and replied, with a smile: —

"You wish to know? Ah well, I do not care to conceal it. Very far away from here there is some one that I love most sincerely."

I know not if they were inquisitive,

nor how she parried them; I rushed out precipitately, and went to take counsel with my despair under the chestnuts of the Luxembourg.

What a wound, what a fall, what anger, and what grief! I can laugh now at the cause, but my heart still bleeds at remembrance of the effect.

It was so serious that I was alarmed by it myself. Was I mad then? How and why had I fallen in love, to such a degree, with a person whom I had known only a few days, and to whom I had just spoken for the first time? What did I know of her, after all? Why had I taken it into my head that I must touch her fancy first, and please her at first sight?

As I went back through the alley of the Observatory I encountered Léonce, one of our young actors, a pretty lad, but very wild and a very poor player; whom I could easily have superseded in a twinkling, had I been treacherously disposed. He had a sad and gloomy air.

"Ah! my dear Lawrence," cried he, almost throwing himself into my arms, "if you knew how I suffer!"

"Why so? What is the matter?"

"She loves some one!"

"'She,' who?"

"Impéria! She has just said so, with an air of bravado, before us all!"

"I know that very well: I was there!"

"You were there? Stay, it is true, it was in connection with you; but it was not on your account that she spoke in that way! It was because of me, to discourage me."

"You love her then?"

"Madly."

I had known nothing of it, and in that respect I was as vain as he, who fancied himself the only aspirant. I refrained from opening my heart to him, and feigned to pity him, delighted to find some one with whom I could talk of *her*. He had loved her ever since her arrival at the Odéon; he had come from the Conservatory, she from the province; and he had made inquiries, and kept up an untiring search, until he knew the real origin, the true history, of Impéria. He had sworn to himself that he would never betray the secrets thus surprised, and here he was relating them to me,—to me whom he had known about eight days, and whom he now called "thou" for the first time.

Impéria's name was Nancie de Valclos. She was from Dauphiny. Her father, the Marquis de Valclos, was an intelligent man, generous, and highly esteemed in his province. He adored his wife, who was very beautiful, and took charge himself of the education of his daughter, in whom he felt a pardonable pride. Madame de Valclos, who had never given occasion for remark, had suddenly, at forty, a horribly scandalous affair with an officer of the garrison. The husband killed the lover; the wife committed suicide. Three months later M. de Valclos became insane, after having lost all his fortune in an absurd enterprise, to which he had been driven by his impatience to realize his property, in order to expatriate himself with his daughter.

"Mademoiselle de Valclos thus found herself virtually orphaned at

the age of twenty; for she deceives us," observed Léonce in the midst of his recital. "She is twenty-two. She conceals her age, to disguise her identity by all possible means; she could as well assume that she is even younger than she is. So perfect a face has no age."

He continued: "As M. de Valclos had been cheated on the eve of a clearly established insanity, and when he was probably already deranged, his daughter might have had recourse to law, and regained at least some fragments of her patrimony. When advised to do so, she coldly refused. Her mother's adventure, the cause of her father's madness, had made too much noise for her to remain in ignorance of it, and she could not bring forward a suit without alluding to that cause. She let herself be stripped of her entire fortune; and when she was certain that there was not left her even the means of supporting her unhappy father, she resolved to earn her living.

"Although she had talent and education, she found no immediate resource, and she made a secret resolution. Bellamare, the *impresario* — an excellent man, of whom you must have heard us speak — had given representations at various times in the town where she resided. In the happy days of the De Valclos family he had even had the direction of private theatricals at the château de Valclos. He had spent several days there, had taken a part himself, and had brought out the little Nancie, then twelve years old, before her friends and relatives. He found she possessed such ability, that he said,

laughingly, before her, 'It is a great pity that she is wealthy. There is the making of an artist in her.'

"The child had never forgotten these words. The poor young lady recalled them, and hastened to Bellamare, who was playing at Besançon. She needed not to tell him her sad story: he knew it. He told her all an honorable man could tell a virtuous girl about the theatre. It did not alarm her. It even appears that she replied to him: 'I am invulnerable. The memory of our misfortunes and our anguish is branded on my soul, as with a red-hot iron. Never shall I be tempted to commit an indiscretion.'

"Bellamare yielded, swore to be a father to her, and, not wishing to depart with her from a place where she was known, appointed a rendezvous for her in Belgium, where she made her *début* under the name of Impéria, and where no one suspected the mystery of her life. In Dauphiny they did not know what had become of her. They heard that she had conducted her father from Lyons to the residence of an old domestic, thoroughly devoted to him, who took care of him like a child. He is not violent, it seems. He has entirely lost his memory, and to make him regain it would be doing him no service. They believe that Mademoiselle de Valclos has gone to Russia, in the capacity of governess. Here they have discovered nothing. It is only Father Bocage who knows all, and myself, who have learned all — alas! shall I confess it? — by listening at the door! Because I am mad, you see! Because to win her I am

capable of anything : because — But all is lost ! She is, she will be, always virtuous, it is true, but she loves another ! ”

“ Who do you think it is ? ” I asked Léonce, pretending to be interested in his sorrow.

“ Ah ! who can tell ? ” cried he, gesticulating wildly ; “ she said *some one very far off*. Perhaps he is an artist whom she knew in Brussels ; perhaps a nobleman to whom she was betrothed in Dauphiny, before her misfortunes.”

“ If he is a nobleman, he acts like a villain in leaving her to perform the hard work that she does. Doubtless he is rich, and has forgotten her ! When she is sure of it, she will forget him likewise ! ”

“ Yes, you give me some hope. Thank you for it ! And then I say to myself also, that perhaps she has invented this love to put mine to the test.”

“ Then she knows you love her ? ”

“ Certainly. I have written it to her several times, in the most persuasive and respectful terms ! ”

“ Offering her marriage ? ”

“ Yes ; my father is a notary ; he has property which I shall inherit.”

“ And he will consent to the marriage ? ”

“ He certainly must ! ”

“ And Impéria replied — ”

“ Nothing. She appears as if she had not received my letter.”

“ Which does not prevent you from hoping ? ”

“ I have hoped, but now I fear ! What do you advise me ? ”

“ Nothing. Observe her and wait.”

“ Then you think I need not give her up ? ”

“ I know absolutely nothing about it.”

“ Let us dine together,” he went on. “ You will suffer me to talk about her. If I were left alone, I should commit some folly.”

I heard him ramble on throughout the evening, for the most part without comprehending a word he said to me. I thought him stupidly presumptuous in aspiring to the favor of Impéria, and I took for my own comfort the petty consolations that I had offered him. Without considering that I was as vain as he, I flattered myself with the persuasion that she had told a falsehood to free herself from the pursuit of Léonce, and that it was not I whom she had intended to discourage.

Seeing Léonce so ridiculous, I nevertheless profited by my rival so far as to resolve that I would act like him in no respect. He took no pains to hide his great despair from any one, and the outcry that he made about it prevented them from connecting it with me. I appeared very gay and very careless, denying that I had made an indirect declaration to Impéria ; I pretended that I had merely expressed my general views on the subject of love and devotion. I succeeded in not being too foolish, and in averting, if not suspicion, at least raillery. Léonce seemed to provoke it by his absurdity, and did me the service of monopolizing it.

Impéria had a small success in the new piece. She played well, and gave general satisfaction. Her head was not at all turned by it, however ;

and she replied to all our compliments, that she did not shut her eyes to all there yet remained for her to learn, before she could take any position in the theatre. Still, she gained confidence. She mounted a step upon the ladder, and appeared gratified. We knew that Bellamare had written to encourage and congratulate her. Mademoiselle Corinne was overcome by her sweetness and consideration, more especially as she had been severely put down by everybody when she had attempted to slander Impéria.

The new play brought Impéria to the theatre every evening. She already had a part in the next piece, which was soon to be rehearsed. So she passed nearly all her time in working, and I could see her constantly; but, unwilling that my father should fancy that idleness had made me change my profession, and wishing to decide on nothing without his consent, I took care to continue my law-studies, and I retired at nine o'clock at night to study until two in the morning. I rose late, and went at noon to the theatre, where I spent the remainder of the day, with the exception of my dinner hour. Impéria performed the hard task of rehearsing three or four hours during the day, and playing three or four hours in the evening, with a change of costume between each act. The rest of the time she worked at her lace or studied at home. She did not lose a moment, and the calmness that she exhibited in this terrible life was inconceivable. She possessed so much intelligence and information, that no sub-

ject appeared foreign to her, and she talked of everything with modest ease. She never seemed either sad or gay. The discovery of her real age had calmed me somewhat, at first; not that she was less beautiful or less desirable for being older, but how her two years' seniority over me had thrown me back! Certainly, the leader of the orchestra was right, in telling me that I was too young to indulge in any future plans whatever!

Despite this new and very evident obstacle in my path, despite the care I devoted to appearing sensible, I soon felt my desire revive in all its intensity: it was like a madness, a monomania. The senseless pretensions of Léonce gave me strength to conceal my malady, but not to conquer it. I was attracted by Impéria, — unwittingly on her part, like the moth by the candle. I absolutely wished to burn myself. She had the advantage of me in birth and education; in her already assured position and decided future; in her talent, to which, though incomplete as yet, I, perhaps, could never attain; lastly, in her age, which gave her superior judgment, in her experience of misfortune, which gave her greater strength and worth. ✕

What could I offer her? A face that people praised, but which might not please her; a paltry sum that represented a meagre livelihood during the two or three years of my apprenticeship; and an enthusiastic love that she had no reason to think permanent.

She made me comprehend this perfectly, when she was forced to notice my struggles and guess the emotion

of my silence. I exerted still more self-control, for what I specially feared was that she should conceive a distrust of me, and beg me never to address her again. I strove to ward off her suspicions, and in proportion to my former desire that she should know my love were my present endeavors to make her think that she had been in error. I even carried my dissimulation and cowardice so far as to pay a little court to Mademoiselle Corinne, trembling lest she should fancy my compliments serious. She troubled herself very little about them; she dreamed of more substantial conquests. Léonce, rejected by Impéria, displayed his pique by attempting to take up Corinne in earnest. She laughed at him; and as for me, she told me confidentially that she regretted my precarious situation, as she did not intend to make a love-match.

Heaven knows that I had never spoken to her of either love or marriage. I had contented myself with talking of her beauty, which was somewhat problematical; nevertheless, my simple stratagem succeeded. Impéria, who was herself very simple in reality, was at length persuaded that I did not care for her, and then she spoke to me with the same sweetness and confidence that she accorded to the others.

I remained divided between the desire and fear of undeceiving her, when one fine day she forced me to reassure her completely. They had been talking of this very Corinne, who let everybody make love to her without caring for any one, and, as was usual, the general conversation

was interrupted by the summons of the call-boy. At last I found myself alone with Impéria for the first time.

"I think you are a little cruel toward my companion," she said to me; "is it from pique?"

"I assure you that it is not," I replied.

"It is because you are all without mercy for women who do not respond to your flatteries, I see plainly!"

"If I were to reproach Mademoiselle Corinne, it would be for the reason that, without responding to them, she listens to them; but what do our childish spite and bitterness matter to you,—to you who will not even allow us to tell you the truth?"

"How so?"

"If one told you the good he thought of you, you would be angry. So you need not fear that you will be tried by trivial flatteries."

Impéria assumed no affectation, to embarrass me. She went straight to the point.

"If you think well of me," she rejoined, "you may tell me so without offending me. I believe I have declared in your presence that my heart belongs to some one who is absent. I repeat it to you, to set you at your ease, because, if you esteem me, you will not put me to any trial."

I replied that I would give her a proof of my respect by entreating her to regard me as her devoted servant.

"After the declaration you have just made," I added, "and which, besides, I had not forgotten, I think you should see, in the fidelity of the devotion that I offer you, the absence of impertinent curiosity and misplaced presumption."

"What you say is very true and very good," she replied, holding out her hand to me, "and I thank you for it."

"You accept my devotion?"

"And your friendship, since it is absolutely disinterested."

She left the greenroom, smiling at me; as for me, I remained to weep in silence. I had just burned my ships.

One morning, while they were rehearsing the last piece to be played before the annual closing, I found myself alone in the greenroom, with a man of medium height and very well formed, whose face impressed me like one of those memories that we cannot exactly account for. His age might have been from thirty-five to forty years. He had small eyes, dark brown in color, a face large and square without being massive, a large mouth, a short irregular nose, a flat, closely shaved chin, and hair brushed down over the forehead and temples. All this made up a pleasant and attractive sort of ugliness. The least smile raised the corners of his lip and deepened the half-dimples in his cheeks. His black eyeballs had a piercing vivacity, his jaw showed angles of indomitable energy; but the smoothness of his forehead and the delicacy of his nostrils counterbalanced by something pure and exquisite the appetites of a combative and sensual nature. One could not fail to recognize in him, at first sight, a comic actor of a certain rank; and I was wondering if he were not a celebrity, when he addressed me, to ask if I belonged to the theatre. I nearly answered him with a burst of laughter, his voice and nasal accent were

so peculiar; but I restrained myself quickly, for this voice was like a flash of light. So I was, at last, in the presence of the illustrious *impresario*, Bellamere! At the same time, by a very logical connection of ideas, I recalled the associations I had had with his face: I had seen it on a photograph at the bedside of Impéria.

I greeted him respectfully, and in three words I told him my position, expressing a wish to make my *début*, as soon as possible in the province.

He regarded me somewhat as a jockey does a horse, walking round me, examining my feet, knees, teeth, hair, and requesting me to take a few steps before him, but all this with a playful and paternal air that could not wound me.

"The deuse!" he said, after a moment's reflection, "you must be bad indeed not to please half the audience, the half that wears the petticoats. You are twenty, and are studying law? Do you know how to dance?"

"The *bourrée* of Auvergne, — yes! And I know all the spirited dances of the students' balls, besides; but I do not intend —"

"I do not speak of your dancing on the stage, but a knowledge of dancing is necessary; it imparts an ease, if not a distinction, to the gait. However, that does not always make one graceful on the stage. Let us see! hand me that cane chair. O, with one hand, if you please; it is not heavy! Why use the right hand, since it was within reach of the left? You must learn to employ both hands equally. Stay, take the chair so, and do this!"

He took it, placed it in the middle of the room, and seated himself on it. I imagined that it was the easiest thing in the world, and that he was making sport of me; however, when I attempted the same thing, "It is not ungraceful," he said, "but it is very inconvenient. That is the way to do in the rôle of a bashful youth who sits down in a drawing-room for the first time in his life. You have placed the chair so that you would sit down sideways, and make a most ridiculous failure; also you took care to look behind you before seating yourself, which is a signal awkwardness; and then you let yourself drop down abruptly, as if you were angry or worn out with fatigue. The movement of the actor on the stage should not be felt. He must be seated as if he had no body, for the act of sitting is always a very vulgar thing. The very furniture designated for that purpose is laughable, when you think of it! By an ingenious jugglery, the actor must make both the use of the furniture, and the act of employing it, forgotten; in tragedy everything must be noble, above all, this movement, which is the most delicate and most difficult of all; in comedy it must be graceful, even when it is burlesque. That which is neither graceful nor noble is necessarily unbecoming. Stay, look at me. This is how you sat down."

And he copied me so drolly, that I began to laugh. Then he rose and reseated himself several times, changing his position, and revealing to me what none of the actors, whom I had seen rehearse and perform, had given

me the least idea of, — a natural grace, the highest degree of art carried into the most insignificant details, the perfection of expression in the most trifling action.

"Among ten thousand spectators," added he, "there might, perhaps, be three, who would know that you sat down so, intentionally, and that there is a complete science in it, the result of long study; but, of these ten thousand spectators, there would not be one who was not unconsciously influenced by your least act. Without knowing why it is good, all will feel that it is good; and there I give you, in two words, the whole secret of the profession."

"I should be very happy," I replied, "to become a member of your company, and receive your lessons."

"That can be arranged," he replied. "Will you be here in an hour?"

"I will be here any time you wish."

"Good; wait for me."

Probably he went at once to make inquiries about me. When he rejoined me, Impéria was on his arm.

"I engage you," he said; "it is settled. Every one speaks well of you, and Mademoiselle Impéria among the rest. What salary do you expect, my dear boy? You should know that a *débutant* is not remunerated in a way to light his cigar with bank-notes."

I replied that I expected no remuneration, since I might be of no use to him. In receiving from him only his good advice, I should still be his debtor.

"Undoubtedly," said he, "all *débutants* should understand that; but you must have something to live on, to dress yourself decently —"

"I have money and clothes. I can wait two or three months very easily, if my apprenticeship demands that time."

"I see that you are a very worthy lad, and that you know Bellamare to be incapable of abusing your delicacy; you shall not repent it. Come to see me to-morrow. I will give you a short rôle to learn; next day you will come to study it with me, but know it well!"

He gave me his address, and left me with a pressure of the hand.

When I took my first lesson, although he really treated me with as much indulgence as if I had been his son, I was quite terrified by his nice appreciation.

"Listen," he said to me, in recapitulation, at the end of the lesson; "certainly it is a great advantage to be gifted as you are; and if you were a fool, you might easily persuade yourself that you had nothing to learn. You are an intelligent lad, and you will comprehend that the beauty of your person and the perfection of your voice are sources of failure as well as of success. When you appear upon the stage, well dressed and gotten up, prepare for a murmur of approval; but, directly after, the audience will be severe and distrustful. At the first words that you speak, however, there will be another favorable murmur; your voice is admirable. And then? You will speak well, I answer for that. A new danger! Hence the audience, alert and attentive, will be fearfully exacting. That is the case with the men of our day,—with Frenchmen above all. We have passed the period

when, under the happy sky of Southern civilizations, beauty was considered almost equal to a virtue. Antiquity has transmitted to us the names of artists who had no other merit than that of being beautiful. To-day, no one cherishes the memory of an actor without talent, had he the physique of Antinoüs or Meleager. At present, they demand *everything, everything*; nothing less than that. But what is least required, perhaps, is classic beauty. It has a prestige only at the first moment. It is tiresome, provoking, irritating, if art can lend it no attraction, which is quite another thing, and which sometimes succeeds in rendering ugliness agreeable and sympathetic. Modern ideas are all for realism, and, to a certain extent, that is an advance; for man is not made merely to serve as a model for a sculptor, and it is not a moral advantage for him to be distinguished above other men by his physical perfection: if he is vain of it, they ridicule him; if he does not turn it to account, they think him unintelligent. One must know how to be handsome, which is much more difficult than to know how to be plain; and in our art, which consists in producing all effects personally and directly, the chief point is to know exactly what one is, in order to know what one must be.

"Ah well! I am going to tell you, as an actor, a painter, and an anatomist,—for I am something of each,—what you are, when repeating your part; a smoking-room Apollo, neither more nor less. Your eyes sparkling, but too bold; your smile very frank, but too unsteady, from

nerves impregnated with alcohol; your body very supple and very strong, but addicted to fantastic attitudes, which lack meaning and originality; your voice clear and sonorous, but seeking by preference the less musical and less natural intonations, and full of false inflections. You would be a detestable comedian. You would always overdo it. You have, I should say, a restless, anxious spirit. You would arrive at *bonhomie* with difficulty, and you would not know how to say in a natural manner, 'Well, how are you?' You might have played the romantic drama; that exists no longer; and public taste inclines more and more to the simple style. If you could have rôles made for you, where, in spite of the black coat, your character would have energetic manners, and a certain eccentricity of mind, you would be good; but one finds, perhaps once or twice in his life, the rôle which is exactly suited to the type that he can represent perfectly. Before becoming famous, he has to submit to all sorts of characters, insignificant or uncongenial to his nature. The great thing in commencing, is to adapt himself, to efface his personality, if necessary; to make himself ready, in a word, to do everything suitably without hoping to be admired and applauded in his own proper person. When you have, to some degree, got rid of yourself, of him who was a handsome student, but not even a tolerable actor, you will begin to study, to invent, to create. Three years of study, at the least, my boy, may make you a charming young *premier*.

It is a good situation; it demands, in addition to all that you have, all that you have not. It is paid very well, because the handsome, intelligent type is rarest. If you do not grow stout, your bust is worth its weight in gold. Even now your legs are equivalent to a pretty sum of money, and under any circumstances your voice is a capital; unfortunately, all this is nothing and worse than nothing, I tell you again, if you take a wrong course. You will not be insignificant, you will be impassioned, but your energy may be ridiculous and your anger that of a bully. Beware of that. If you are tractable, I will save you from that danger; but, if you have not a great amount of sensibility and truth, you will become cold and commonplace. In conclusion, my conscience commands me to tell you this; you have to work prodigiously at the most difficult and thankless of trades. The result may be a life of glory and fortune; again, it may be nothing of the sort: and I will not guarantee at all that in three years you will not be a dead failure. The profession, which is indispensable, in nine cases out of twenty overpowers originality. Reflect, then, before quitting your present position and your future career for the stage. You will tell me to-morrow if you feel the courage to transform radically your individuality, at the risk of becoming a being absolutely annihilated, hopeless, empty!

"And again, consider this: that one may change his profession so long as he walks in the beaten track of society; but the man, once entered

into the Bohemia of the theatre, can never return to any other. It is not because prejudice thrusts you back. That matters little. An energetic man triumphs over it, and obtains everywhere the place that he knows how to take; but after the theatre, he no longer possesses an available energy. The theatre uses him up, consumes him, devours him. One lives as long there as elsewhere, on condition of not leaving it, and of keeping up this factitious strength, nervous over-excitement, and intoxication that are found nowhere else; once return to a quiet life, even when you have felt an imperious need of it, and *ennui* assails you, the mind fills with phantoms, the train of actual life disheartens you, real feelings are confounded with the fictions of the past, the days seem ages, and in the evening, at the hour when you were wont to see the foot-lights rise to illuminate your face, and the public hastening in to be entertained with your performance, you fancy you are nailed alive into your coffin.

"No, no, my child, do not enter the theatre unless you are drawn thither by an irresistible call; for it is a lottery, where the winners, after having risked everything, are forced to stake their life and soul.

"I ought to tell you this. Do not imagine that it is the result of the trial we have just been making. If I consulted only my own interest, I should conceal my thoughts from you; for such as you are, in a very short time you will be of great use to me. They are not fastidious in the provinces, they are not spoiled

there; and for a success of *appearance* you have every requisite. To an actor already launched, I should make no suggestion; but you interest me, you please me, and you are rushing headlong into the unknown. I owe the truth to you."

I thanked him warmly, and promised to consider; but I did not consider; I only thought of Impéria, from whom I could not see myself eternally separated. I summoned all the strength of my will for a desperate enterprise, and one month later I departed for the province, with Impéria, Bellamare, and the troupe which he had recruited.

"So I was an actor, monsieur, an actor for three years; and as I always bore myself like an honorable man in the profession, I left it without reproach. But I have, none the less, forfeited the future I could have aspired to, and I have nearly made my father die of grief, as I will tell you another time, for I have been talking so long that you must be tired of hearing me."

"Not in the least; if you are not fatigued, continue. I wish to know the result of your love for the charming Impéria."

"And I intend to tell you, but not just now, if you will permit me. To take breath, I will sketch the profile of the cascade."

"Very well. One word more, however: what is the *fearful misconduct*, then, of which certain good souls in the vicinity accuse you?"

"You ask. I have been an actor; and, according to them, that is all that is needed to insure damnation."

II.

When Lawrence had sketched a little, and reflected a little, as if to arrange his reminiscences in due order, he resumed his recital:—

I should not see my father before vacation, and I had three months of freedom until then. I wrote him that I was going to travel with a friend for my instruction. This short explanation was sufficient for the worthy man. Unused to any sort of study, ignorant of any social mechanism outside his own sphere, he could easily believe that I was going to study during my travels, since I assured him of my resolution to devote myself untiringly to my future profession.

Before taking you with me in my nomadic life, I must introduce to you the principal personages with whom I united my destiny. Some left Paris with us, others joined us on the way.

Bellamare's inseparable companion and perhaps his best friend, although his antipodes in character and appearance, was a man whose singular history deserves to be related. He was called Moranbois; and, though the least mirthful man in the world, his real name was *Hilarion*. He had never known his family. A hospital foundling, he had taken care of the pigs at the house of a peasant who beat him and left him to die of hunger. Carried off, half willing, half reluctant, by passing mountebanks, he had proved, however, little qualified to divert the public; they soon abandoned him on a road where

a man from Auvergne had picked him up to carry his pack. This trade pleased him; he had food enough, he loved to travel, and his new master was not a bad man. He found that Hilarion was a brave lad, very patient, resigned, and faithful. The pedler had but one fault; he was a perfect sot, and very often, bending under the weight of his wares, he scattered them upon the road. Hilarion, with a little exercise, became a packhorse capable of bearing the commercial stores of his employer. Besides, as he had a kind heart, he did not leave him in the bottom of the ditches, where he took frequent naps in the course of his journey. When he saw him reel and stagger, he prudently led him away into some open field, remote from quarrels and secure from thieves. He watched over both master and load. He united the duties of the horse and the dog.

The pedler became attached to Hilarion, and shared his profits with him. Thus the child might have earned and laid by something; but when his master was thirsty, he borrowed the lad's portion, and forgot to return it. It is true that Hilarion forgot to claim it.

This friendship and partnership lasted a long time. Hilarion was twenty when his master died of dropsy in a hospital, leaving a little money, which his young associate carried to the heirs, without deducting anything to pay him for his services. They were poor peasants burdened with a family, from whom he had not the heart to demand anything. He left them without consid-

ering his future. By dint of seeing others careless of their lot, he had grown accustomed to do likewise. Already misanthropic, he had seen and known nothing good in his life, unless, perhaps, his drunken master, who had not maltreated him, but who also had not remunerated him. However, he brought no reproach against his memory. This man had taught him to read and write passably, also how to use a cudgel in self-defence. He had developed his physical strength, his coolness in danger, his inclination for a wandering life. Going steadily on alone, Hilarion believed that a courageous, strong, and sober man could not die of hunger, even in the midst of a selfish world.

He was in error; it needs a capital to start with, be it ever so small. No work can dispense with the necessary tools. Hilarion had not the wherewithal to purchase the most trifling stock. He did not know how to utilize his empty hands, until, after two days of fasting, passing over a public place, he saw a wrestler, who threw all the soldiers of the garrison, and he bethought himself that his fists might render him good service. This athlete seemed to him more skilful than robust, and he presented himself as a competitor, after having carefully observed his performance. Only, while wagering that he could conquer him, he confessed to the audience that he was dying of hunger and thirst.

"Eat and drink," said the cross-roads Alcides, loftily; "I do not throw those who would fall of themselves."

An improvised collection permitted the new-comer to devour a bit of bread, and to swallow a glass of wine, after which he descended into the arena.

It was truly an arena, the Roman amphitheatre of Nismes; and when Hilarion Moranbois related his story, he said that, seeing for the first time this vast monument, so fine in its proportions, without knowing what it was, without the slightest idea of the past, he felt as strong and valiant as ten thousand men.

The professional Hercules was worsted by the improvised Hercules. The next day he demanded his revenge. Hilarion had dined well; the amateurs of the vicinity had celebrated his victory at the tavern. He gained a new conquest, so brilliant that other strolling wrestlers were summoned to compete with him. He threw them all, and was engaged, with the understanding that he should receive one fourth of the profits. He left this troupe, however, because it was proposed that he should let himself be thrown by a man in a mask, who was no other than the wrestler whose place he had taken. They made him very advantageous offers, if he would take part in this comedy, which always proved a great success with the public, and brought him a good deal of money. His self-love got the better of his interest; he refused with scorn, flew into a passion, knocked down his employer, broke the big drum with a blow of his fist, for which they made him pay a hundred-fold its value, and made his escape, his hands still empty, to repair to Arles,

where he had been told he would find other arenas. He had decidedly a taste for classic monuments.

On the way he encountered Mademoiselle Plume-au-Vent, who danced a species of tarantella, accompanying herself with the Spanish tambourine and the triangle, with much skill; this was his first love. They made their *début* together in several towns upon the route, one of which proved nearly fatal to him.

When he had finished exhibiting his talents in the public place, the evening of his arrival, he was cautiously addressed by a servant-maid, who conducted him through a labyrinth of obscure streets, to a house of good appearance, buried in a wilderness of gardens. Here, a slender, dark lady, with a quick, flashing eye, addressed him in these words: "Will you enter my employment as undergardener? You will do nothing. You will sleep during the day. At night you will quietly mount guard in the garden. I am tormented by a garrison officer who is madly in love with me, and threatens to carry me off. He is a desperado, a devil, who will do as he says, and who is very strong; I give you warning. My people are cowards, bribed by him, perhaps, and you see that alone, in this isolated dwelling, I could receive no assistance from without. If you see this man prowling under my windows, or even in my grounds, knock him down. Do not kill him, but treat him so that he will never wish to come again. Every time that you give him a lesson of this kind you will receive a hundred francs."

"But if he is stronger than I?" replied Hilarion; "if he kills me?"

"Nothing venture, nothing have," replied the lady.

"That is fair enough," thought the wrestler.

And he accepted.

Eight nights passed away without a leaf's rustling or a grain of sand stirring in the garden. On the ninth night, by the clear light of the moon, an officer, whose appearance corresponded to the description given Hilarion, opened a gate, to which he had a key, and approached the house. Hilarion was unwilling to attack him without warning. He had the simplicity to tell him that he was about to do him an injury, if he did not withdraw immediately. The stranger laughed in his face, called him a fool, and threatened to roll him in the melon-patch, if he tried to hinder him. Hilarion could not suffer this language, and the contest began. The visitor's impertinence had angered him, and the vigorous defence he made did not permit him to handle him gently. Hilarion rolled him in the artichokes, and left him there, so badly worsted that he believed him dead. He ran to inform the lady, who came out with a torch and her chambermaid, to ascertain the result.

"Wretch!" cried she, "what have you done? You have assassinated my husband, who had just returned from a journey! Make your escape, and let me never hear of you again!"

Hilarion was stupefied.

"Claim your hundred francs," whispered the maid, suddenly; "*she* knew very well that it was monsieur,

and she owes you a grudge for not having killed him outright."

Hilarion was so terrified at having committed a crime while thinking to perform good service as guardian, that he would claim nothing, and ran away, swearing they should never catch him there again.

At Arles he rejoined Mademoiselle Plume-au-Vent, who had already entered into partnership with an Alsacian giant and a (so-called) Lapland dwarf. He met with tolerable success; but the time of the conscription was at hand, and he drew the Number One. He served as soldier in Algiers for seven years, and gained some advantage from it. He finished his education there, that is, he learned French and Arabic, and as he wrote a very fair hand and reckoned very accurately, as he was a model soldier, brave and punctual, his comrades, who loved him in spite of his roughness, thought that he would be promoted. He was not, however, and, notwithstanding his good deportment and assiduity in the service, he was struck off the rolls for insubordination. It is true that he detested his superiors, whoever they were, and that he replied to them disrespectfully. Obedient to the military rule, he could not endure a personal command, when it seemed to overstep the limits of strict authority, or not to observe them scrupulously. A spirit of criticism, very singular in a man of his low rank, very unfortunate in his present position, had developed itself in him, and bade fair to become the foundation of his character, the obstacle of his future. He received

more punishments than rewards; and when he had served his time, hoping nothing from a re-enlistment, he returned to France, as solitary, as destitute, as he had left it.

In the regiment he had had much practice in all kinds of gymnastics, and in all he had been the first. Still, he did not like the profession of gymnast, and the prospect of recommencing his exercises in full blast did not please him. For some years he was porter on the port at Toulon; *homme de peine*, as it is called, — a dolorous expression which sufficiently describes a hard and gloomy life. Physical strength is a more perilous gift than one would think. Men seek to turn everything to their advantage, and the exceptional strength of Hilarion exposed him to all sorts of experiments. He was sounded by the thieves, and nearly involved unwittingly in attempts at murder. Enlightened in time, he held malefactors in execration, and believed he saw them everywhere; his misanthropy increased; and as in the midst of fatigue and sadness he reflected more than suited his wretched condition, he became a sort of Diogenes. Alone in life, he made himself still more alone by his habits and his thoughts.

Very disinterested, very careless of the morrow and indifferent for himself, he turned nothing to account, not even his own brave acts. He distinguished himself in several rescues, and received several medals, but without thinking of asking any reward, without caring to join any association, without consenting to accept the slightest thanks. He was accustomed to say that, not loving

the human race, he exposed his life only for the pleasure of using his muscles and exercising his judgment. Several persons from the South, who afterwards met him again in civilized life, recalled the strange and proud individual whom they had seen a porter at Toulon, and had even employed for the peculiarity of his character. Silent, absorbed, haughty, his glance was always stern and suspicious, his speech harsh, often abusive, and always cynical, his gesture angry, and all at once a scornful calm would succeed his threatening manner. Everything was to him a source of irritation, and almost immediately after an object of scorn or of indifference.

One fine day he found an infant entirely abandoned, who attached itself to him. It was a pretty little boy, who, although very cowardly, was not frightened by the bearded face of Hilarion. Touched by this proof of confidence, or struck with its singularity, he carried the child to his den, tended and reared him after his fashion, but without succeeding the least in modifying his instincts of idleness, cowardice, and vanity. This vain and feeble creature, who was no other than the young *premier* Léonce, of whom I told you in the first part of my story, became Hilarion's tyrant. The sternest man needs apparently to be governed by some secret sympathy; to gratify Léonce, to procure him playthings and new clothes, to protect him from the ridicule and ill-treatment of other children, in a word, to watch over him and have him always near him, Hilarion left the port and bales of Tou-

lon, and resumed his old profession of wrestler, his life of adventure, his spangled waistband, his tinsel diadem, and his ancient sobriquet of *Coq-en-Bois*.

It was in this capacity that he happened to perform one day, some ten years ago, in the presence of Bellamare, whom chance had brought to the fair at Beaucaire. The sinister face, harsh voice, and odd pronunciation of this personage certainly did not attract the *impresario*, and he could only admire the strength of his biceps; but next day, as Bellamare was returning in a hired cab, he encountered on the road this Hercules coming from the quarter where he lived, with Léonce on his shoulders, — Léonce, ten or twelve years old, but too grand a prince to travel otherwise than on the backs of others. Hilarion Coq-en-Bois remembered having carried the pack at the age when his *protégé* made others carry him, and not feeling sensible of sufficient charm of mind or attraction of character to amuse his pupil, he did what he could for him, what he knew how to do, — he spared him all physical fatigue, and fatigued himself instead. Was he not born *homme de peine*?

While absorbed in these philosophical reflections, upon the hill before him Coq-en-Bois perceived a carriage which grazed the edge of the precipice in an alarming manner. He judged that the driver of this vehicle was asleep, and he quickened his pace; but before he had time to reach it the horse took fright at a goat, swerved to the right, and then to the left. It was all over with

Bellamare, for the driver of the carriage, while asleep, had dropped the reins. Fortunately Coq-en-Bois had hurriedly laid down his burden, had hastened up, had seized one wheel in his mighty grasp. The horse, which had already lost footing, rolled into the abyss alone, the two shafts being fortunately broken clean off with the lines. The cab, stopped by Coq-en-Bois, recoiled, and Bellamare, leaping out, saw that his rescuer had one hand mangled by the unprecedented effort that he had just made, at the risk of being involved in the general ruin.

Thus commenced their friendship. They travelled together as far as Lyons, and the wrestler, being pressed with questions, related his story. The proud modesty with which he mentioned the heroic actions of his life, that something grand or trivial which in every word revealed his noble and sullen character, impressed the artist vividly.

Bellamare's dream was to discover different types and bring them to perfection; he fancied, not without reason, that a man so inured to fatigue, so resigned to all contingencies, so firm and so proud, so distrustful and so incorruptible, would be an invaluable factotum for him and his company. Coq-en-Bois, or we will now say *Moranbois*, — for the first thing Bellamare did was to find him a suitable name, whose euphony would not be too strange in his ears, — Moranbois had but one really insupportable defect, the coarseness of his language. He promised to correct it, and could never keep his word; but he displayed in Bellamare's service so many es-

sential qualities, such as honesty, devotion, courage, practical intelligence, that the *impresario* could never consent to part with him. He even carried his friendship so far as to undertake to make an actor of Léonce. He could only make him a pretty, empty-headed boy, thinly veneered with the wit of others, and a somewhat more than average performer; but he procured engagements for him in the province, and even at Paris, where he still vegetates in insignificant rôles. I need not tell you that this self-infatuated personage believes himself the victim of injustice, that he accuses all the managers of having sacrificed him through jealousy of his success with women; finally, that he has completely forgotten the fatherly devotion of Moranbois, that he does not care a rush for him, and would see him reduced to utter destitution, without remembering that he owed him everything. This race of ingrates are rendered striking in dramatic life by their folly; but does not one encounter it elsewhere? It is my opinion that it abounds everywhere.

Moranbois, Bellamare's right-hand man, soon found that he had not enough to do in travelling as courier to engage the theatres, to prepare the lodgings, to make arrangements with the hotel-keepers, lamp-makers, hairdressers, and machinists, to order the posters, organize the means of conveyance, etc. He wished to utilize himself by reason of his strength, and one fine day Bellamare's company were convulsed with laughter at the declaration of the ex-peddler, ex-porter, ex-wrestler, that he had

health enough to act plays into the bargain. Offended by the mirth of his audience, he called all the actors mouthpieces, harlequins, and buffoons (I soften the epithets singularly).

They were used to his peculiarities, and laughed the more. He grew seriously angry, and affirmed that he could play the brigands of melodrama better than any one.

"Why not?" said Bellamare. "Learn a rôle. Let us rehearse it by ourselves, and we will see."

Moranbois made the attempt, and gave the rough voice of his part in the most satisfactory manner; but he lacked imagination. Bellamare furnished him with ideas, and taught him to turn his natural defects to account. Tractable with this ingenious and persuasive master, Moranbois became a very tolerable brigand for the province. He did no injury to the play, and pleased the populace greatly. His success did not intoxicate him, however; he consented to fill the most inferior rôles in the plays where he was only a "utility." He never thought it beneath him to speak but three lines, to represent a thief, a peasant, a drunkard, a workman, in a short scene, or even to put on livery and carry a letter. This humility was all the more touching from his secret conviction of being a great actor, — an erroneous but naïve belief which did not increase his pride; for which Bellamare felt grateful to him.

But I have not yet told you the oldest result of this association between a person of exquisite tact and culture, like Bellamare, and the rugged, ill-dressed being, always im-

possible in his manner and language, whose portrait I am sketching for you. Bellamare, who sees and observes everything, without appearing to notice anything, discovered that M. Hilarion Moranbois was a very keen and accurate critic. When visiting the Paris theatre in his company, he was struck with his judgment on the plays, and his just appreciation of the actors. He took him to the museum, to see if he had discernment outside the theatre; Moranbois stopped instinctively before the paintings of the masters, and was enthusiastic over the Greek statues and the Roman busts. He could not state what constituted the ideal and what the realistic, but he expressed the difference in his own way, and Bellamare perceived that he had understood it thoroughly.

He consulted him in regard to the spirit and sense of monuments, and the art of scenic decoration, and found him full of suggestions and invention. It was settled; the specialty of Moranbois was revealed. He was pre-eminently the man of good advice and prompt appreciation. When he witnessed a rehearsal at Paris, — where he accompanied his manager everywhere, — in ten words, mostly coarse and brutal, he told Bellamare what parts of the play would fail, and which would be successful, and what would be its final fate. He never made a mistake. He was, in himself, the susceptible, vibrating public, simple and uncorrupted; generous toward the slightest effort, cruel toward the least falling off; always ready to laugh or to cry, but remorseless

when they bored him. He was instinct personified. His mind, still undeveloped in mature age, was like a thermometer of the crowd. What authors of high literary rank would have thought of consulting this man, with a long aquiline nose, elevated head, sprinkled with thin locks, a brown sunken cheek, small hollow eyes, keen and gloomy; this sombre personage in rough coat, waistcoat of Scotch plaid, and tumbled cravat, with hands innocent of gloves, who kept in a corner with the machinists, and who might have been taken for the least attentive of them? And had you said to this literary *élite*, "The poor devil that you see yonder, who hears and judges you, is a former mountebank, who balanced a carriage-wheel upon his chin, and juggled with cannon-balls, by no means hollow; ah well, ask him his opinion and follow it; he is the embodied public, by whom you will be hissed or borne in triumph!" — what surprise these masters of the art would testify, what scorn perhaps!

Bellamare consulted Moranbois like an oracle, and the oracle was infallible. I have related to you this long history, I have told you all these details, and allowed myself this digression, to give you an idea of that intellectual Bohemia of the stage which is recruited from all classes, consequently from both extremes of the social scale. The most different destinies, the most dissimilar educations, the most opposite faculties, seem carried thither, like the various ruins that the tide drifts and heaps up at random upon a rock. From these fragments of a

world of dead passion, disappointed ambition, spontaneous growths, ardent dreams, gloomy despairs, mental maladies, marvellous unfoldings, mad, sublime, or stupid inspirations, is reared the fairy palace called dramatic art, the sanctuary of splendid or miserable fiction, open to all the winds of heaven. It is something fleeting as a dream, confused as a chaos, where all that is false is linked to the representation of the true; where the purple of the sunset and the azure of the night are the result of electricity; where the trees are painted canvas, the mist a screen of gauze, the rocks and colonnades of distemper; you are aware of this, you know all the artifices, you see through all the tricks, but what you do not know is the phantasmagoria of moral life which lives there with a life as artificial as the rest. This bent old man with a cracked voice and dull eye, who makes a thousand spectators say every evening, "Where have they fished up that old fellow who plays an octogenarian to the life, and who still preserves his memory?" is a young man of twenty-five, who has all his teeth and all his hair, who is fresh and healthy, and whom his mistress expects when he shall have wiped off his wrinkles, and placed his false bald head upon a wooden block. He straightens himself and sings with a manly voice, going down stairs four steps at a time. His rôle of old man is easy for him, and does not diminish his gayety. In contrast with him you admired that handsome conquering hero, whose fiery eye and fresh voice

express passion and triumphant gal-
lantry. Alas! he has been young
these forty years, and his love-mak-
ing costs him very dear. This ex-
cellent comedian, who makes you
nearly die of laughter, is a wretch
who thinks of suicide, or seeks
forgetfulness in intoxication. This
third-rate valet, whose classical em-
ployment consists in receiving kicks
in the back, is a scholar who makes
archæological researches of great
importance, or an antiquarian who
collects rare works. That other, who
represents the tyrants or the traitors,
is a father of a family who takes his
children into the country whenever
he has a day of leisure. There is
another who paints charmingly, and
who acts the grocers' parts; another,
who represents persons of high rank,
dukes and princes, has a passion for
chess or for angling; others are
sportsmen, oarsmen, pianists, engi-
neers, what not. And the ladies?
This one is a courtesan, and plays the
part of *ingénue* to perfection. That is
a respectable matron, and personates
courtesans admirably. This one has
a wonderful elegance and purity of
diction; she can scarcely read her
parts, and understands not the first
word of them. That one speaks
badly, and seems to lack intelli-
gence; she is very thoroughly edu-
cated, and fit to keep a boarding-
school. Here is an austere duenna;
she is a speaker of *doubles-entendres*.
There is a plump, bold peasant-girl,
a sprightly waiting-maid; hush,
these are perfect devotees, perhaps
mystic doves of Father Three-Stars,
who makes a specialty of theatrical
conversions.

So everything in this pretended
life belonging to the stage is contrast,
empty seeming, and authorized decep-
tion. Sometimes, again, the actor
so identifies himself with his charac-
ter, that he never throws it off. Such
a one, who cared only for pipe and
billiards, becomes a profound politi-
cian, because he has acted grave,
historical parts. Such another, who
believed himself a radical republican,
becomes conservative, because he
plays financial rôles. Thus, con-
trasts are sometimes effaced; fiction
and reality become confounded in a
man to such a point that he who
deserves a Monthyon prize would
renounce his profession sooner than
consent to perform a bad action on
the stage; sometimes contrast reaches
the last limit, where the most unself-
ish of men can excel in personating
Shylock.

I had a brother actor who had
been a Trappist for some years, and
related strange and romantic inci-
dents to me about the inner life of
convents. It appears that monastic
life is also a rock where the most in-
congruous fragments of human society
are stranded, and that the caprices
of destiny are there personified, very
much as in the theatre: but there,
everything dies out and ceases to
exist; the stupefying influence of
uniformity puts an end to all ec-
centricity. In dramatic life noth-
ing is confounded, but all stands out
in broad relief; individuality grows
more and more distinct. There are
rôles for each, and even I, who tell
you this, have been peasant, student,
actor, peasant again, peasant for-
ever, perhaps, but peasant henceforth

against my will. In what social series could I be reckoned? Every one who passes through convent or theatre is, with few exceptions, forever unclassed.

Let us return to the troupe of Bel-lamare. He had at that time a *grand premier rôle* who cost him a great deal, and caused him no small trouble. He endured him, in the hope that I could replace him at the end of the quarter. This person, who was still handsome, though no longer young, did not lack talent; unfortunately, his mania was to object to it in any one but himself. He rehearsed like an amateur, without ever attending to his own *effects*, so intent was he on watching those of others, in order to suppress or paralyze them. In the province, they often abbreviate the text of the plays that they perform, according to the ability of their performers, or the susceptibility of the local public; they cut out words that would be misunderstood or ill received, situations that would require impossible scenery, entire rôles that are lacking in the company. These erasures, ingenious or absurd, according to the skill of the director, very frequently pass unperceived. Lambesq; our leading actor, had only one idea in his head,—to efface all the parts except his own. In a scene for three, he wished to appropriate the cue of the second interlocutor; in a dialogue, he wished to monopolize both question and answer. I shall always remember the ninth scene of the third act of the “Marriage of Figaro,” where the grace and prettiness of Suzanne offended him. In this scene, cut up into terse and lively

dialogue, he declared at rehearsal that Mademoiselle Anna did not answer soon enough, and his own part dragged on that account. So he proposed very seriously to modify it thus. Hear first how the dialogue begins:—

SUZANNE, *breathless*.

My lord!—pardon, my lord!

COUNT ALMAVIVA.

What is it, mademoiselle?

SUZANNE.

You are angry!

THE COUNT.

You wish something, apparently!

SUZANNE.

My mistress has the hysterics. I came to ask you to lend us your smelling-bottle. I will bring it back directly.

THE COUNT.

No, no, keep it for yourself. It may perhaps be useful to you, etc.

Lambesq determined not to allow Suzanne to say a word. Scarcely had she left the greenroom, when he forestalled her by crying out:—

“What is it, mademoiselle? You see me angry! Your mistress has hysterics! She wishes me to lend her my smelling-bottle! Ah well, here it is, but do not bring it back; keep it for yourself! It may be useful to you.”

The entire scene, four pages in length, was thus continued in monologue.

“Why not?” said Lambesq; “Almaviva is a *roué*; then he is not a fool. He knows very well that Suzanne seeks him on some futile pretext. This pretext is the *nerves* of

madam. Since he always has a smelling-bottle about him, he understands further that she has come to borrow it. In the course of the scene he has a surprise, however. It is at the moment when Suzanne encourages him; but is there any need of Suzanne's speaking? Cannot her admirer sufficiently interpret and translate her eyes, her smile, her simulated confusion. See how well it goes!"

And he recited the remainder of the dialogue as follows:—

"If you would consent to hear me! . . . Is it not your duty to hear MY Excellency? . . . Why, then, cruel girl, have you not said it sooner? But it is never too late to tell the truth. You will repair to the garden at twilight; do you not walk there every evening? You treated me so harshly this morning! . . . It is true that the page was behind the arm-chair! You are right, I forgot it! . . . However, listen, sweetheart, no rendezvous, no dowry, no marriage! You told me, NO MARRIAGE, NO MASTER'S RIGHTS. Where does she catch up what she says? On my honor, I shall dote upon her! . . . But your mistress awaits this bottle; delicious creature, I will embrace you . . . Such is the world!—She is mine!"

Thus coolly did Lambesq adapt Beaumarchais and other writers, ancient or modern, when he fell in with a troupe where he was allowed free play. Bellamare would not suffer it, and he regarded Bellamare as a stupid, obstinate routinist. He lost his temper, sulked, spoiled the rehearsals, and during the performance no one knew what folly he would improvise

to display himself, and *sound* the stubborn spectator by a persistent *underlining* of words, glances, and gestures, which was not always approved of, but which forced all his disconcerted comrades to yield him the monopoly of the *effect*.

Another leading actor, who personated at will the lovers, logicians, and traitors, was Léon, whose sole resemblance to Léonce was in his name. Léon was handsome, good, brave, and generous. He loved the art, and understood it, but he did not love the profession, and he was habitually melancholy. He believed himself created for some loftier expression of his intellect than reciting rôles. He wrote plays that we sometimes acted, and which were not without merit; but a timidity that was, so to speak, *bilious*, a self-distrust that bordered on inertia, prevented him from publishing them. He belonged to a good family and was well educated. A difference with his parents had thrown him on the stage. He was much loved, very useful, and greatly esteemed; however, he was never happy, and lived wrapped up in himself. I exerted myself to gain his friendship, and obtained it: I know not whether I have preserved it.

Madame Régine, who, from time to time, had taken second and third rate parts at the Odéon, was a member of our company, and played the leading parts in the province. She acted *Phèdre*, *Athalie*, *Clytemnestra*. She was neither young nor handsome, spoke a little too thickly, and lacked dignity, but she had spirit and confidence, and gained the applause of the audience by main force. She was a

very good-natured person, of sufficiently average morality, generous heart, great appetite, inexhaustible gayety, and iron constitution. She was very devoted to Bellamare, and on very good terms with us, rendering herself useful or agreeable to all, but inclined to take advantage of everybody, now and then.

Isabelle Champlain, styled Lucinde, personated fashionable coquettes. She was very handsome, with the exception of too long a nose. This nose could never secure an engagement at Paris: a physical defect condemns much real talent to perpetual banishment in the province. Lucinde was not an ordinary person. She understood her rôles, she had a fine voice, she spoke well, and dressed with elegance and taste. Supported by a rich wine-grower, who, being married in Burgundy, could not maintain her near him, she was very faithful to him, partly from prudence, partly from love of her art and of her person. She was anxious to preserve her full voice, her fine form, and wonderful memory. Honest and avaricious, selfish and cold, she neither benefited nor injured others. Her service at the theatre was most assiduous. There was never any cause to reproach her; but she was very eager in the arrangement of terms, and demanded a large salary. We had a pretty soubrette, arch, lively, and quick as a rocket on the stage. In real life, Anna Leroy was a sentimental blonde, who read romances, and was always struggling with some unhappy passion. Now she loved Lambesq, now Léon, now me. She was so sincere and sweet, that I

never feigned to be in love with her. I respected her: Léon scorned her, because Lambesq had compromised and humiliated her. She lived in tears, awaiting a new love, which always recommenced the series of her deceptions and her lamentations.

So the masculine rôles were sustained by Bellamare, Moranbois, Lambesq, Léon, and myself; the feminine parts by Régine, Impéria, Lucinde, and Anna. A dressing-maid, who served them all, whom they called *La Picarde*, played the silent parts, or those of only three or four words. The man who performed the same offices for us, and who, outside the theatre, had been for a long time attached to Bellamare in the capacity of body-servant, must not be passed over in silence. He bore the strange nickname of Purpurin, and styled himself Purpurino Purpurini, a Venetian nobleman. This jest, of whose origin I am ignorant, — he did not know it himself, — had become reality in his mind. Never having known of any relative, except a great-uncle, who had been, he said, *under assistant hay-bearer* in the stables of Louis XVI., he was persuaded, by some association of ideas difficult to understand, that he might be of Venetian origin and patrician descent. Bellamare related Purpurin's strange notions pleasantly, without seeking to explain them. This person, he said, amused him by putting him out of patience, and he had the privilege of always astonishing him by some folly impossible to foresee, or by some fancy impossible to account for. In fact, he was a thorough 'blockhead, three fourths

idiot, full of esteem for himself and scorn for those beneath him. His only virtue was his love for Bellamare, and he would have shared, if necessary, his worst misfortunes with a superstitious confidence in his destiny.

"M. Bellamare," he would say, "must needs be what he is, that is, a man of courage and genius, for me to have attached myself to the person of an actor, — I who have served in grand houses in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and to a republican, — I who am legitimist from father to son."

If he had been met with the objection, that, being of Venetian origin, he should be republican on principle, he would have been greatly astonished, and replied by some argument taken from the history of China, or the Apocalypse; for he was never silenced, and his replies were so utterly inconsequent, that whoever argued with him was himself nonplussed.

"He always shuts my mouth by the wandering of his wits," declared Bellamare. "One day when I asked him why he brought me blue stockings to play Figaro, he replied that 'M. Lambesq looked very well with long hair.' Another time, when I was complaining of the headache, he pretended that it was the fault of the barber, who had shaved him badly. And that is always the way, like a game of cross-purposes."

Purpurin made himself useful on the stage, however; he played the simpletons, and played them with such an utter misconstruction, making use of his natural well-qualified

manner to represent the simplicity of his character, that he unconsciously succeeded in being very comic. It was always the same face, that of a fool, namely, his own, that he displayed to the public, and the public did not suspect the innocence of the proceeding. They fancied that Purpurin created this burlesque type, and they thought it very amusing.

You imagine, perhaps, that a success acquired so cheaply satisfied the self-love of Purpurin? Far from it. He was unintentionally ludicrous, and despised his rôle profoundly. He had a passion for blank verse, and dreamed only of tragedy and tragic parts. He tormented Bellamare and Moranbois to let him rehearse *Théramène*, and I must say that this rôle thus rendered would have created a sensation, for it was impossible to conceive of anything more astonishing and more side-splitting.

Bellamare's company was very eccentric. It played a little of everything, — the drama, modern comedy, vaudeville, classic tragedy, and comedy. The repertory was considerable, and was renewed throughout with incredible facility. Familiar with the province and the tastes of different places, Bellamare adapted wonderfully to this varied public the choice of the works with which it furnished him. Certain towns like only the pathetic or the terrible; others, again, care only for the burlesque; others prefer new plays, the latest productions, coming from *the capital*; others still are classical, and wish for alexandrines.

The first qualities which Bella-

more required in his actors were quickness in learning their parts, and docility for the *mise en scène*. He knew that it was impossible to bring out in the province a troupe composed of first-class actors, but he also knew that what is chiefly wanting in the representations of strolling artists is the general effect; and he applied all his strength of will to obtain this: by which means, with average performers, he succeeded in producing plays well learned and well acted.

We opened our performances at Orleans, and there I made my *début*, before a scanty and dispiriting audience. I was not much frightened, however; Impéria was absent. She had left Paris first, to visit her unhappy father, I suppose; and she would not rejoin us until the third day.

It was a great relief for me not to make my first venture in the presence of a judge whom I dreaded more than all the world beside. Moreover, I came out in a rôle of small importance, one of M. Scribe's insignificant lovers. It only needs some address, and, thanks to Bellamare, my personal appearance was all it should be. But I felt that I was very cold, and, in the second act, I became completely frozen on discovering the pretty graceful head of Impéria, who was looking out at me, from the side scene. She had arrived a moment before, and knowing how much Bellamare was interested in me, she also felt an interest in my *début*. She listened to me, she studied me; nothing could escape her examination. Everything

seemed to spin round before my eyes, which, probably, became confused and wild. I felt as if flooded with light, although the illumination was not brilliant, and I could have wished to hide myself in any twilight which would have veiled my defects. The fear of being ridiculous paralyzed me, and when I should have shown a little passion, I felt that my acting was so awkward and so bad, that I had a mad impulse to escape into the greenroom; I cannot say how I regained it, or if I shortened my part. I was ready to faint; I staggered like a drunken man. Bellamare was entering on the stage; he had only time to say to me in passing: —

“Courage! that was very well!”

“No, it was very bad,” I said to Impéria, who extended her hand to me, as if to sustain me; “have I not been bad, superlatively bad?”

“Bah!” she answered, “you are timid, that is all; certainly more timid than I would have believed, and more than you yourself expected probably. It is always so, but it passes off with habit.”

I had passed unnoticed with the public, but not with my companions. Léon, who already loved me, was sad. Lambesq, who already detested me, was radiant; he affected to pity me. Léon shunned me; he did not feel the courage to address me; Régine said unceremoniously, “What a pity that he should have an empty stomach! such a handsome fellow!”

Even Purpurin muttered between his teeth: “It is not M. Lawrence who will cast M. Talma into the shade just yet!”

I was retiring sadly to my garret, certain that I should not close my eyes all night, when Moranbois called me to take a *bock* with him. I longed only to hide myself, and I refused.

"You are proud," said he, "because you have been at college, while I was brought up on the dunghill?"

"If you take it so," I replied, "I will drink anything you wish."

When we were seated in a corner of the brewery, "I wish to speak to you," he said; "and it is in the name of Bellamare, who has not time this evening. Must he not be chattering with this princess that he calls his daughter?"

"Is it of Mademoiselle Impéria that you speak in that fashion?"

"Yes. I permit myself that liberty, with your leave, youngster! Impéria is no more to me than any one else. She does nothing wrong as yet; but patience, her turn will come, and Bellamare, who always sees angels hovering above her, will find out later that he must not trust in any daughter of the theatre, let her stockings be of silk or all in holes. But enough of that; Bellamare charged me to console you for your misadventure of this evening. The fact is, you were very bad. I expected that, but you have gone beyond my expectations."

"If this is the way you console me—"

"Does monsieur want compliments?"

"I know that I was detestable; and I am mortified, profoundly mortified by it. What pleasure can you find in increasing it?"

"If you take it in that way, little one, that is another thing. Tell me, then, why, having rehearsed passably, you became all at once so cold and gloomy?"

"How do I know? Can timidity be accounted for?"

"Ah, here it is! You had gone so far without embarrassment, and believing yourself above your audience. You were like the savage who drinks wine without knowing that it will make him tipsy. Ah well! distrust yourself in future. Have your fright beforehand, and you will have less on the stage. The tribute must be paid, either in advance or at the time. I say this for your good, and on the part of your director. He believes that nothing is lost, and that you will do better next time."

"He believes it because he is good, indulgent, and an optimist; but you, who are candid, do not believe a word of it."

"Do you wish me to tell you your trouble, without mincing matters?"

"Yes, tell me everything."

"Well, then, my boy, you will never succeed so long as you wish to please Impéria."

And as, surprised by the penetration of this Hercules, my hand shook, in setting down my glass, he added, fixing his pale and steady eyes on mine: "You are astonished that Moranbois sees clearer than the others? It is even so; he sees everything. You are infatuated with this young lady; you are with us to be near her. It is an affected creature, and a true *cabotine*, who looks only for success. When one does not work for the sole pleasure of doing

well, one works badly, you see ; and when he does it for the sake of a woman, he only commits follies. I have warned you : that is enough. I have nothing more to say to you."

And he left me, without allowing me to answer.

I had leisure to meditate on the sad consequence of my failure, for I could not sleep all night. My mishap naturally assumed inordinate proportions in my eyes. Sleeplessness is a magnifying-glass which, on the walls of the brain, exaggerates hairs to beams, or an ant to a hippopotamus. I began to doze, only to awake with a start, beneath a shower of apples, which a gust of wind blew even over my bedclothes. Sometimes it seemed to me as if, in this good town of Orleans, where certainly no one thought of me, they were walking through the streets with lanterns in their hands, and that the object of this illumination was that all the citizens might assemble and say, "Did you notice how bad that young actor was in the comedy?"

"You were not bad," said Léon to me, next day. "You merely lost the opportunity to be good."

"But can one be good in so weak a rôle?"

"One can play it properly ; that is, seek the exact limit of the character. You found that boundary at rehearsal. Why did you stop short of it?"

"I was paralyzed."

"It is a very slight accident, and may perhaps be the only one. Try not to do like me, who, since the beginning, have failed, never to retrieve myself again."

"What is that you say? If I had

a quarter of your talent, I should think myself very fortunate."

"My dear Lawrence, I have **not** the shadow of talent. Do not **speak** of that, it saddens me, and does **no** good."

As he really seemed sad, I dared not insist. He was one of those **who** will not be consoled. But how **surprised** I was by his discouragement! What had he then aspired to, since he was not content with success in all his rôles, and had more parts at his disposal than he cared for?

I asked Bellamare's opinion on the subject. He considered a little, and replied:—

"Léon speaks and thinks like a man of disappointed ambition. To hear him, one would often fancy him ungrateful; but when you see him act, you feel the lofty generosity of a noble character. So I can only attribute his disgust with life to some morbid tendency of his temperament. If he were at the topmost round of the ladder, at the pinnacle of every species of triumph, he would still be dreaming of some purer glory, though to find it he might have to go to the moon. But let us talk of yourself, my boy. You were put out last night. That is no matter. You must learn your lesson over, and begin again to-morrow. This time, you have a better part in the second play, and can retrieve yourself."

Instead of making amends, I was colder than at my *début*. The same terror took possession of me, although I entered on the stage without apparent emotion. My face and person sustained the public gaze without confusion, and I appeared sufficiently

at my ease. As soon as my own voice struck my ear, my head whirled dizzily. I hastened to recite my rôle like a task from which I longed to be rid, and produced on the spectator the effect of a self-sufficient gentleman, who despises his audience, and takes no pains with his performance.

The actor's embarrassment assumes every imaginable form, contrary to his purpose. There is no false appearance that it does not borrow, no lie that it does not invent for its disguise. The phenomenon it wrought in my case was the most grievous which could have happened to me; for I was genuinely modest and desirous of doing well, while I was condemned to the mask of impertinence. The condition was not absolutely new to Bellamare, who had seen everything in the course of his strolling professorship; nevertheless, I afforded so glaring an instance of it, that he was somewhat taken aback, and I read in his expressive glance more compassion than encouragement.

As for me, I was so thoroughly wretched, that my companions sought to console me. Moranbois himself, after his characteristic fashion, said a few encouraging words; but Impéria said nothing, and that cut me to the quick. In all other respects she talked to me with sweetness and good-will; only she shunned the least allusion to my disaster, and I knew not what to think of her opinion of my future. I resolved to unburden my mind, and made bold to seek a *tête-à-tête* with her.

It was much easier to find an opportunity for this in the province than in Paris. If the lot of inferior

companies is unhappy and distressing, that of those who are merely passable is very agreeable, in the generality of towns. For those which have no permanent theatre, the arrival of a strolling troupe is always an event. Besides, there is everywhere a certain number of amateurs who have a passion, not so much for acting as for actors. Everywhere, the young men of family attempt to hover and strut about the actresses. Everywhere, also, there are literary persons, young or old, with unpublished manuscripts in their pockets, who, without hoping to secure their performance, dream at least of the delightful pleasure of reading them to actors. Whence ensued relations in which those interested naturally bore all the expenses, invitations, country excursions, with hunting, fishing, dinners, and entertainments, *according to the giver's means*. These amusements were always very gay, thanks to the good-humor of the actors, who knew how to escape with tact from literary wasp's-nests; and to the coquetry of the actresses, who knew how to avoid the pitfalls of gallantry, when it seemed advisable.

Bellamare had no objection to these pleasure-parties. He was too well known everywhere to be accused of taking any mean advantage. His wit and knowledge were a full equivalent, and his good advice well worth all the dinners in the world. They knew that he was very fatherly with his *pensionnaires*, and he was rarely invited without the rest of us. Régine loved good eating, and Lucinde to make fine toilets; but Léon,

fond of solitude, fastidious in the choice of his acquaintance, and sensitively proud, declined almost all the invitations. Moranbois, who was the busiest of the company, and who, besides, did not like the constraint of good society, preferred to rest an hour or two at the *café*, with Purpurino Purpurini, on whom he lavished fearful invectives while regaling him, and who treated him in return with profound disdain. These two irreconcilable enemies could never do without each other, for some unknown reason.

I confess that on receiving the first collective invitation, in which our manager included me, I was strongly inclined to follow Léon's example. I had not, like him, the ideas and habits of a gentleman, but I had preserved the pride of the peasant, who dislikes to receive what he cannot return. Léon did not blame Bellamare for loving this joyous and easy life, since he brightened it with the light of his intelligence and the charm of his playfulness; but he considered himself disagreeable, and nothing was more tedious, according to him, than an ill-humored parasite.

I had not the same motive for entertaining scruples. I was naturally gay; but, as an artist, I had, as yet, shown only my defects. I was, perhaps, doomed to be a nonentity. I had no right to the cordial reception vouchsafed to the others. Discretion would have commanded me, then, to abstain; but Impéria was at all these entertainments, and I decided to join them, however my pride might suffer. I saw plainly that Léon disap-

proved of me. I pretended not to notice it.

The first party was given us by some garrison officers, a half-dozen of whom came to invite us to a picnic which they had been planning among themselves for a long time. It was all arranged with us, when Captain Vachard, the highest in command, changed the project from a boating excursion, with dinner on the grass, to that of a regatta on the waters of his brother, Baron Vachard, who had a country-seat, and a park intersected by a small arm of the Loire. The offer did not greatly please the others, but *among the military* they do not consult their own preference when a superior is of the party and they had to renounce the picnic to accept the Baron's invitation. It was privately suggested to us that the Captain much preferred dispensing the hospitality of his brother's larder and wine-cellar to pay in his share of the costs, and that he amused himself only at the expense of others.

These first ideas which I received of the Captain's character prejudiced me so strongly against him, that I proposed to renounce the *fête*. Léon expressed himself very plainly as to our folly in submitting to the whim of such a miserly fellow. Impéria said that she would do whatever Bellamare decided. Bellamare, who, by dint of strolling, had become a little careless in matters of small consequence, decided that it should be put to vote. The majority declared gayly for the regatta *in the waters* of the Baron. They delighted in ridiculing the hospitality proffered

them, when it afforded a chance for criticism ; and to punish the Captain for the tone of authority which he had assumed with his lieutenants and sub-lieutenants in this affair, the women resolved to keep a light rein over him.

We had to travel three leagues in a carriage or on horseback to reach the Baron's chateau. Saddle-horses were procured for the ladies who wished to display their horsemanship. Neither Bellamare nor Lambesq cared for riding, and a carriage was brought us, in which they invited me to take a seat, together with them and Régine. By this arrangement our three young actresses, Impéria, Lucinde, and Anna, were accompanied by the officers, and we followed after, like peaceful and confident guardians. It seemed to us that Vachard had premeditated this triumphal departure from the town, and had reserved for himself the principal rôle, for he prepared to lead the procession with Impéria, who abandoned herself without reflection to the innocent pleasure of managing the Captain's gentle mare. I remarked openly that we, the manager, my companions, and myself, should form a most ridiculous rear-guard. A young second comedian, called Marco, whom we had enlisted a few days before, and who was a thorough madcap, caught my meaning and bounded into the saddle behind Lucinde, swearing that he would descend from it only at the point of the bayonet, since it was the duty of the cavalry to bear the infantry, in case of need. Lucinde, whose stately equilibrium was deranged by this

invasion, grew red with anger, and Bellamare interfered very gently, for he declared that he was not manager in the country ; and this comical discussion was prolonged, to the great chagrin of Vachard, and amid the loud laughter of the audience, when I cut it short. Seeing everybody in good-humor, and catching sight of the Captain's horse, which a soldier held, while the Captain strove to recall Marco to more suitable conduct, I vaulted upon this handsome and well-equipped horse ; I mounted so quickly that the soldier, astounded, dropped the reins, and I went off like an arrow, signing to Impéria to follow me. She understood me, she approved my course, and besides her mare was accustomed to follow the beast of which I had taken possession. I did not know how to mount by rule, but I had nervous legs, a supple body, and the hardihood of a peasant. To be surer of myself, I had dispensed with the stirrups, and I galloped as when across the fields I bruised the freshly cut grass without saddle or bridle, and with a rope for all rein. Impéria, likewise reared in the country, and well versed in all noble exercises, was a remarkable horsewoman. In the twinkling of an eye we had cleared the great Place du Martroy and the whole town of Orleans, followed at a considerable distance by the cavalcade, who laughed, shouted, and applauded. The young officers were delighted with my audacity, and the trick played off upon their Captain. As for him, he did not laugh very heartily, as you may imagine ; but not to attract attention to the ridiculous

incident to which he must submit, he hastily took his place in the carriage, with Bellamare and Marco, who had given up *protecting* the ladies, when he saw me rise so opportunely to the honor of our company. Naturally, the carriage-horse, whose reins Vachard had taken, and which he lashed vainly with his whip, could not overtake the equestrians. Impéria had begged me to wait for them; but when they were near us, excited by their cheers, we set off again at a furious pace, resolved not to let them pass us, and not to give the Captain the possibility of rejoining us.

At length we reached the place where we must leave the banks of the Loire, and go inland, and there we no longer knew the way. The race had given my companion an animation that I had never seen in her before.

"How beautiful you are!" I cried, desperately, when she stopped to ask me what direction we must take.

She had had confidence in me, you remember, since the day when I had sworn not to think of making love to her. So she did not take my exclamation and emotion in bad part.

"I ought to be like that upon the stage, you think?" rejoined she, "and not cold as I am. Ah well, I could say as much for you; unfortunately we cannot act on horseback."

The moment had come to ask her what she thought of me, and the opportunity was excellent. Our horses needed to breathe, they were streaming with sweat. We let the bridles fall upon their necks, rightly thinking that they would find the way themselves, and, as we were now in

advance of the others, we could exchange a few words.

"You pretend," said I to Impéria, "that you are cold upon the stage. Is it to console me for being frigid?"

"You are frigid, it is true; but that is little matter, if you are not frozen."

"Indeed, I fear that I shall always be both."

"You cannot be certain."

"What do you think of it yourself?"

"Nothing, yet; it is too soon."

"And, besides, you do not care."

"Why do you say that?"

"It seemed so to me."

"Why?"

"You cannot feel much interest in me."

"What have I done, then, to lose the confidence that you accorded me? Come, say?"

"You have the air of no longer knowing if I exist."

"If I have that air, it is false. I talk of you constantly with Bellamare, and I told him yesterday that I loved you and esteemed you more every day."

"Why? I entreat you, tell me why. I would like so much to know in what I can deserve your friendship, and that of M. Bellamare!"

"I can very easily tell you why; you are kind, sincere, devoted, intelligent, free from vice. In short, you are equal to Léon, and you are more lively, more amiable, and more social."

"I am very happy, then; but still, if I never have ability."

"Then, unhappily, you will leave us."

"Why? Could I not make myself useful in some other rôle than that of lover? Many people make a living on the stage, without possessing talent."

"They live poorly. One should not follow a profession that he does not love."

"But I love the theatre, in spite of my inferiority, and there are many others like me."

"Then keep on, if you are not ambitious —"

"I am not ambitious, I am — I really do not know what I am."

"I will tell you. You have artistic tastes, and you will probably be an artist, whether you succeed as an actor or do something else. You love this careless life, because it is precarious, these travels, these new faces and new countries, to observe, enjoy, or criticise; above all, you like what I like best about it, being associated with a group, amiable or not, a medley, diverting or affecting, or faulty and irritating, — a multiplicity of life, in short. It is like family life, after all, without its interminable chains, its deep anguish, and its horrible responsibilities. But it seems to me that with Bellamare for manager, one cannot be absolutely unhappy, and everything in the lot which he creates for us amuses or interests me."

"I feel like you, in all respects. Then, if forever lacking in talent and success, I still cling to this sweet and careless life, you will not regard me as one of those unhappy fools who cherish a ridiculous delusion? You will not despise me?"

"Certainly not, for I am in the selfsame situation. I follow a ca-

reer in which I am by no means sure of success; and I feel that I should persist in it, in one way or another, even if I found I had no real ability. That is the way, you see! When one is stage-struck, everything else loses its relish."

"Still, it is not your natural and final lot. From day to day you meet with opportunities of making what is called a brilliant marriage."

"I do not wish to make a brilliant marriage."

"Still, you would not wish to make one that would plunge you into destitution?"

"No, on account of the children I might have; for, if it concerned only myself, for my own part I am indifferent to all privations. With economy and industry one can always obtain the necessaries of life."

"Let me tell you, then, that no one knows you. All our comrades think you prudent, cold, ambitious even. Bellamare has predicted a grand future for you, and they imagine that you would sacrifice everything to this end."

"If I believed it, perhaps I should regard it as a sacred duty to sacrifice all to it; but I credit it too little to consider it seriously. I do my best; I try to understand, and wait."

"And you do not suffer while waiting? you are gay?"

"So you see!"

"Because you are sure of him who loves you —"

"Have I said that any one loves me?"

"You have said that you loved some one."

"That is another thing."

"Would you love an ungrateful—"

"Perhaps he is not ungrateful; suppose he does not suspect my preference—"

"Then he is blind, an idiot, a regular brute!"

She burst out laughing, and her gayety made my heart leap with joy. I fancied she had invented this love as a defence from foolish declarations, in some moment of fear or *ennui*, and that her heart was as free as her existence. She was playful enough to have improvised this malice; for since the beginning of our journey she had revealed her character, always reserved before strangers, but admirably lively and even mischievous with her companions; and, as she was neither cunning nor deceitful, she could not seek to impose on me in *tête-à-tête*.

"Then," I cried, "you have been making sport of us; you love no one?"

She turned around, as if about to reply; but, seeing a horseman who had advanced beyond the others, her cheek whitened, and she said, directing my attention to him: "It is the Captain! I believe he has taken the horse of one of his young officers. So they are cowards, these soldiers? They dared not preserve us from this encounter!"

"Ah well, what then? What do you fear from this Vachard?"

"I fear—I know not what, a quarrel with you!"

"In your presence? I will not grant him that satisfaction. Let us give him a race, since he invites us to it."

"That is best," she answered, "let us fly!"

We were borne on, as if by the wind, until we reached a great, ugly house, absurdly painted rose-color, and our horses plunged us into a court-yard, where three pots of geraniums, barred from the sun, together with two hideous lions, in *terra-cotta*, completed the decorations of the mansion.

It was Baron de Vachard in person, who received us with a stupefied air, but who, recognizing our horses, understood, or supposed, that we belonged to the number of his invited guests. He was a man of about forty-five, very little older than his brother, the Captain; indeed, they may have been twins, I have forgotten now. They bore an extraordinary likeness to each other; the same short, strongly built figure, high shoulders, fresh color, thin and grizzled light hair, short nose, that seemed as if it had been forgotten, prominent eyes, projecting ears, set on toward the front like those of skittish horses, angular and very heavy jaw; only the expression of these two faces, cast in the same mould, differed essentially. That of the elder was mild and stupid, that of the Captain stupid and irritable. They seemed equally addicted to habits of order and economy. They had another habit, or rather infirmity in common, which we were not slow to perceive.

The Baron, having noticed that the horses were in a frightful state, gave orders for their grooming, without asking if we were not warm or thirsty ourselves; then he conducted

us in silence, into a very cool and very gloomy saloon, and there, after a certain effort, as if to collect his thoughts, he said to us, with an air of distress, "Where is my brother, then?"

"He is coming," I replied; "he was close upon our heels."

"Ah, very well!" replied he.

And he waited for us to take the initiative in conversation; Impéria maliciously waited for him to begin it; and I waited, through curiosity, the result of this reciprocal waiting.

The Baron, either from absence of mind or lack of brains, found absolutely nothing to say to us, and walked up and down the apartment, pursing up his lips in a singular manner; one would have said that he was mentally whistling some musical reminiscence. We were assured of it, when the sound, grown almost distinct, permitted us to recognize an interpretation *sui generis* of the *bravura* of *La Dame Blanche*. He became aware of his preoccupation, and looked at us, made a great effort to break the silence, and remarked that it was fine weather. The same perfidious silence on the part of Impéria. He turned his round eyes toward me, as if to question me. I averted mine to see how he would extricate himself from his embarrassment. He freed himself from it, by a short pause before the window, and by a more distinct repetition of the phrase, *Ah quel plaisir d'être soldat!* with the accompaniment of a rhythm drummed upon the glass; after which he sprang outside, without appearing to remember us.

Impéria laughed merrily. I made a sign to her, for I had just perceived in the farther part of the room a person whom the abrupt transition from bright sunlight to obscurity had at first rendered invisible to us. She was a tall, stout woman, of brunette complexion, once handsome, Mademoiselle de Sainte-Claire, of whom we had heard, formerly Mademoiselle Clara, a provincial actress, who personated fashionable coquettes, now M. de Vachard's companion and housekeeper.

"Pay no attention to the Baron's manners," she said with unconcern. "His brother and he, — well, they are a pair! You did not come to be entertained by his conversation, did you, but to pass a day in the country? It will not be very amusing, I warn you. Among stupid people all is stupid; but the dinner will be choice, I give you my word. The Baron is an epicure, — his only talent, as far as I know; as to the other, he has not even that. But what have you done with the more idiotic of the Vachards?"

And without waiting for any answer, she ordered refreshments for us, and kept on talking to us, without reserve or ceremony before the servants.

"Come, now, my little ones," she resumed, "which ones of Balandar's company are you? Ah! pardon, you call him Bellamare, at present; it is his theatrical name; he called himself Ballandar, formerly; perhaps that was not his name either. You know we take what names we wish, or can. Just now, I am a noble maiden lady who has had misfor-

tunes. Always the same trick, you know! The Vachards that we meet on the way do not believe it, but they love to persuade themselves of it, and they repeat it to their friends and acquaintances; it sounds well. Your manager must have spoken of me to you. He loved me well once, in the days when I was a young and pretty girl, slender as you, my little one, and he — I will not say, my boy, that he was handsome as you, but he had youth, wit, and a certain charm with women. Does he still adore them all at once, the good-for-nothing? On my word, I have been very jealous of him, and I revenged myself well. But tell me, little one, you are not the one that they say is his delight at present, — the beautiful *Impéria*?"

Impéria reddened for the second time. She had already colored, when this woman had spoken of noble adventuresses; she was entirely disconcerted on receiving this open insult; but, as I was about to reply, she forestalled me, and answered with vivacity, —

"I am the delight of no one; and I am not beautiful, as you see."

"That is true, you are small and without brilliancy; but you are pretty, and, since you come alone, with this tall, handsome fellow, you are lovers, my turtle-doves, married perhaps? In short, it is not you who are the latest fancy of your manager and of our Captain. This handsome *Leander* who accompanies you would not suffer it."

"Then there is in our troupe," I demanded, "a person whom the Captain boasts of having captivated?"

"Ah yes! the famous *Impéria*, whom I am wild to see!"

"He boasts of it?" I repeated, crimson with anger, while poor *Impéria* grew pale, and cast on me one of those agonized glances that seem involuntarily to appeal to the first honest man for protection or vengeance.

"He does not boast of it, perhaps," replied *Sainte-Claire*; "he confides it to all his regiment, and it is in response to this confidence that the Baron, who is not liberality itself, has launched out to-day with a grand dinner for his brother's mistress. I must tell you that the Baron is jealous of me, because the Captain also makes love to me; so he is charmed when the Captain pays court to others. But however the Captain diverts himself, he will always return to me, who hold the purse-strings, you understand!"

Impéria took my arm, as if to go away. She was so agitated that I thought she was about to swoon, and her name escaped me. *Sainte-Claire*, perceiving the blunder she had just made, perhaps intentionally, evinced no confusion, but, with the unconcern of ill-bred people, burst out laughing.

"Let us go," said *Impéria*, leading me away. "It is a shame for me to come in contact with such persons."

"Let us stay," I answered. "Stay, since you are with me; despise this impudent duenna, who lies perhaps through jealousy; and let us see if the Captain really boasts of it."

"I understand you, *Lawrence*! you wish to give him a lesson. I forbid you. You have no right."

"It is my right and my duty : remember, you said farewell forever to the world which you left. You are an artist ; you have in me, in each of your associates, a brother, whose honor is responsible for yours. I cannot say if Lambesq is of my opinion ; but in my place Bellamare, Léon, Moranbois himself, perhaps even little Marco, would not let you be insulted. If we were gentlemen, our protection might compromise you ; but we are actors, and prejudice does not forbid us to have courage."

"If all do not possess it," she replied, "you are one of those who have it in abundance, I know well ; and therefore I am unwilling —"

She could not say more : the Captain, red as a beet, and covered with perspiration, approached us, with the evident intention of reproaching us for our prank. I advanced three steps to meet him, and looked at him in a way to disconcert him, for he stammered some unintelligible words, wreaked his wrath on a geranium, which he nearly uprooted from the pot in which it languished, assumed a forced smile, contracted his lips, as his brother had done when receiving us in the saloon, and passed on whistling the same air. They had the same odd trick, and in the regiment they had christened them the brothers Fufu.

When Impéria saw that the Captain did not seek to quarrel with me, she grew more and more reassured, and determined to laugh off the adventure.

"Truly, I am foolish," she said to me ; "I still have pruderies that do not suit my profession. I assure

you, Lawrence, that I blushed at my anger directly after. Our vocation is to amuse others ; our philosophy should be to amuse ourselves with them when they are ridiculous, and not suffer ourselves to be wounded, especially when we are good for anything."

I allowed her to believe that the affair was ended, and we hastened to rejoin the joyous band, who were already starting on the Baron's waters. Figure to yourself three wherries upon a long, stagnant pool, and you can fancy the regatta. In a twinkling I perceived that all my companions had evil intentions, and that the young officers had guilty hopes, the project or desire of all being to give the Captain a ducking. The women understood us, and would not enter the boats, except Sainte-Claire, who jumped heavily and resolutely on board the leading craft, and took the rudder, while the Captain seized the oars and begged Impéria to trust herself to him. Instead of her, it was I who accepted the invitation, after having communicated by signs with Marco, who steered the second boat, and Bellamare, who had charge of the third. Soon, in place of a regatta, a naval combat was improvised, and the two boats together executed a furious onslaught against ours. Their object was to throw the Captain over, in the confusion of the struggle, and amid a fearful hubbub. I strove to effect it, while appearing to defend him ; and the thing would have been easily managed, if Sainte-Claire, who was not duped, and who bore up bravely against fortune, had not turned

against me, calling me traitor, with loud laughter and coarse jests. She was strong as a man, and brave as a woman who is fighting. I allowed her to declare herself against me, and try to throw me overboard. Then I called to my aid my natural dexterity, for I would not use my strength with a woman, however little feminine she might be; and with the same trip I launched into the Baron's green waters his amiable brother and his valiant housekeeper. Then I leaped on board the other boat, which let itself be captured, and shouted victory, which brought more honor than pleasure to Vachard, pickling with Sainte-Claire in the shallow but turbid water.

They seemed to take it in good part, and every one was deceived except me. They thought the Captain had a better temper than they had given him credit for; and dinner passed off with a noisy gayety that did not suffer any particular allusion to the events of the morning; but, as we were passing under an arbor to smoke and drink coffee, the younger Vachard, approaching me, said in a low voice, with a dry clear tone that contrasted with his wine-seasoned look, "You have ruined my horse and spoiled my uniform; you have done it purposely."

"I have done it purposely," I answered calmly.

"It is enough," replied he.

And he withdrew.

At daybreak the next morning I received a visit from two officers, friends of the Captain, who summoned me to retract the declaration I had made him, or to render him

satisfaction for my words. The first point I refused; the second I accepted, and the meeting was appointed for the day following at the close of the performance, for I was needed in the play. Singularly enough, I was not agitated by this first duel as I have been since then in other encounters. My cause appeared so just to me; I hated so cordially the man who insulted Impéria, and who had intended to compromise her before the very eyes of her companions! I regarded myself as the natural champion of the company; and although I possessed very little knowledge of fencing, while Vachard was well skilled in it, I did not doubt for a moment that fate would favor the right. What was stranger still, I played very well this evening. I had, it is true, a good rôle, which I had accepted with some trepidation, but which I filled to the satisfaction of every one. I felt raised above myself, by my confidence in myself as a man, and I forgot to distrust myself as an actor. At one time in the performance I even played very finely, and was applauded for the first and last time in my life. The excellent Bellamare embraced me, weeping for joy, as soon as the curtain had fallen; Impéria pressed my hands with effusion.

"Come, beautiful princess," said a harsh voice from behind me, "embrace him also, if you have a particle more heart than a grasshopper."

At this agreeable interruption from Moranbois Impéria smiled, and turned her cheek to me, saying, "If

it is any recompense, let him take it!"

I kissed her with too much confusion to appreciate the pleasure; my heart choked me. Moranbois struck me on the shoulder, saying in my ear, "Chevalier of the fair sex, they await you!"

How did he know of my affair, when I had concealed it with the greatest care? I have no idea, but his announcement made me leap with joy. My lips had just been drinking in the perfume of my ideal, and I felt as if my stature had gained a hundred cubits. I could have overthrown a legion of devils.

"Friend," said I to Moranbois, who had followed me into the dressing-room, and, with most unprecedented politeness, was assisting me to dress; "you have been fencing-master in a regiment; how does one go to work, when he knows nothing about it, to disarm his man?"

"He goes to work as best he can," he answered; "have you coolness, idiot?"

"Yes."

"Ah well, have no hesitation; go straight ahead, blockhead, and you will kill him."

This prediction produced no sinister impression upon me. Did I desire to kill him? No, certainly, I am very humane and not revengeful. I could not see clearly beneath the spell that influenced me. I wished to conquer, but I did not think myself skilful enough to choose the means of doing so. I knew my adversary to be formidable, but I did not fear him; that is all I recollect of this rapid drama, in which I

played the part of an impassioned man. At that moment I should have regarded any philosophic scruple as an argument of fear.

I had taken Léon and Marco for seconds; I desired that the affair should be clearly an engagement between soldiers and artists. Vachard having the choice of weapons, we fought with swords. I do not know what passed. For two or three minutes I saw a scintillation at the end of my arm, I felt a burning heat in my breast, as if my blood, in haste to leave me, was rushing out to meet a thousand sword-points. I thought to parry an attack, when Vachard rolled upon the grass. It seemed to me as if my weapon had crossed the space: I sought my adversary opposite, and he was dying at my feet.

I had fancied myself cool, but I perceived that I was completely intoxicated; and when I heard the regimental surgeon say, "He is dead," I thought that he was speaking of me, and was astonished to find myself still standing.

At last I understood that I had just killed a man; but I felt no remorse, for he had had ninety-nine chances to my one, and I was wounded in the arm. I did not perceive it till they came to dress it, and at that moment I saw the livid face of Vachard, who seemed absolutely lifeless. I felt a chill through all my body, but my mind took no real cognizance of it.

He was seriously injured, but he recovered; he was not worthy of a dramatic end. He has lost his brother since then, and has married the Sainte-Claire, who styles herself

at present Baroness de Vachard, but who gives no more regattas.

As for me, I was surprised on leaving the scene of the duel to see Moranbois beside me. He had followed me, and, without showing himself, had witnessed the affair. Silently he conducted me home, and silently he passed the night with me. I was agitated, and I dreamed continually, but only of the theatre, not of the combat. On awaking I perceived my Hercules sleeping in a chair behind my curtains. He replied to my thanks by a vituperation; but he pressed my hand, saying that he was satisfied with me.

My wound was not serious, and notwithstanding the warning of the surgeon, for whose visit I did not wait, I hastened to make inquiries concerning my victim's condition. It seemed hopeless; but by evening there was less cause for anxiety, and I was able to attend rehearsal, without emotion, and without having my arm in a sling.

I supposed that no one at the theatre knew anything about the matter, for in the city nothing had as yet transpired; but Moranbois had told my companions everything, and Bel-lamare received me with open arms.

"You showed us last night," he said, "that you were an actor, but it needed not this affair of honor to convince us that you were a man. Ah! do not habituate yourself to these amusements; now that you have talent, it would be disagreeable for me to see my handsome young *premier* return with his eyes put out, or crippled. I shall insert it in your next engagement that duelling is for-

bidden on account of your duties at the theatre."

While thus jesting with a lively manner, he had a tear in the corner of his eye. I saw that he loved me, and I embraced him tenderly. Impéria also embraced me, saying, —

"Do not repeat this."

She then added in an undertone, "Lawrence, you are good and brave, but every one here believes — what is not, and what cannot be. Be considerate also, and let it be understood that you do not think of me."

"And what matters it to you?" I replied, wounded by her preoccupation, after the crisis from which I had hardly emerged, and whose palpitations still shook my breast. "When they would tell you that I love you, would it be a disgrace for you?"

"No, certainly," said she, "but —"

"But what? That one whom you prefer would be unwilling?"

"If I prefer any one, he does not think of me, as I have told you. Only, I accepted your friendship, and cannot pledge myself to anything more. Must everything be changed between us? Shall I be obliged to put a constraint upon myself, to be reserved, to treat you as a young man with whom one counts her words and even her glances, that she may not seem to act coquettishly or foolishly? You know well that I wish to remain free, and that, on that account, I must not suffer myself to love. If you are my friend, you will not enter on a contest which has always terrified me and put me to flight. You do not wish to spoil a happiness that I have gained with so

much difficulty, after troubles and misfortunes of which you have no idea?"

I was governed by her. I swore to her that I would always be her brotherly associate, and that she should not have to protect herself from my besiegings. I did not think to accuse her of coldness or selfishness, although the fact might have appeared patent to me, since she was not in love with another, or overcome that love that she might not undergo its consequences.

Léon was pleased with me also, and he told me so with effusion. Régine overwhelmed me with caresses, Anna began to admire me as a hero, Lambesq detested me more, little Marco conceived an infatuation for me, and made himself my shadow. Purpurin, wishing to testify his esteem, called me M. de Lawrence; Moranbois, while continuing to treat me roughly, ceased to call me bumpkin. The lowest employee of the theatre believed himself ennobled by my glory; in one day I had become the lion of the troupe.

They soon began to discuss the event in the city. The regiment acknowledged as little as possible the rude lesson, given by a strolling player to an officer. Vachard was neither loved nor respected; but although at heart their sympathies were with me and not with him, the *esprit de corps* did not allow them to take my part, and some of them spoke of a chance thrust on my side, followed by an awkward one. The civilians did not consent that I should play so insignificant a rôle, and in the coffee-houses there were

tolerably sharp arguments concerning me. The soldier loves the actor, without whom he would perish of *ennui* in the barracks, but he does not like to have a *pékin** an adept with the sword; while among the civilians they were delighted to see a *pékin* of the lowest rank, that is, an actor, cope with military bullies.

In higher circles, at the prefecture at the general's, and in the city drawing-rooms, they were excited, they questioned and commented; the ultra respectable people were scandalized at the ardor with which overhasty young spirits extolled me, to such a degree that Bellamare, acute and prudent as experience, assembled us on the eve of the advertised performance, and said to us with his accustomed playfulness:—

"My little children, we have gathered palms of glory in this good town; but military glory is denied the artist, and from various intelligence that I have received, it seems that we bid fair to have a disturbance to-morrow evening in the parterre and even in the orchestra. We shall serve as a pretext for antipathies or ill-feeling of which we are ignorant, but for which the administration or public opinion would hold us responsible. The surest way is to paste a slip across the poster, and to secure our second-class carriage for this evening. Our persons absent, our glory will remain untarnished by the fisticuffs which may be forced to buffet apple-cores to-morrow; for if the artist has his

* A name given to civilians bearing arms during insurrections or other disturbances.

devoted partisans, the warrior has his likewise. Let us make off, then, and may the gods of Olympus, Apollo, and Mars protect us !”

“Hurrah for Bellamare, who is always right !” cried Marco ; “but hurrah for Lawrence also, whom none of us will ever disown !”

“Let us all cry ‘Hurrah for Lawrence !’ replied Bellamare. ‘He is our pride, all the same !’”

“You counted on making money here,” said I, “and my laurels cost you dearer than they are worth.”

“My son,” he replied, “money always comes to him who knows how to wait for it ; and if it never comes, honor is more precious.”

Before leaving, I wished to obtain some further news of Vachard, and I hastened to his house. The Baron himself received me in the dining-room, where his breakfast was served, and where, without recognizing me, so absent-minded was he, he offered me a chair. I thanked him, and was about to withdraw, when he remembered me.

“Ah ! very well !” said he ; “it is you who — fu — fu — you who have nearly killed my — fu — fu — You regret it ; very well — fu — fu — An absurd quarrel, very unfortunate, very unfortunate ! But what could he do ? A soldier — fu — fu — is obliged to be hasty, and you had taken away his — fu — fu — his mistress —”

I felt that the blood mounted to my head, and that I was ready to quarrel with the Baron for having believed, and persisting in believing, his brother’s impudent lie.

“How is he ?” I broke in precipi-

tately ; “I have nothing else to hear ; do you hope to save him ?”

“Yes, yes, fu — fu — we have hopes.”

“Ah well, when he is recovered, have the kindness to tell him that I did not wish to quit the country, without leaving him my address, in case he should wish to repeat it.”

‘And I gave him the name and address of my father, which he took and examined with a stupid air, saying : “Repeat it ? — but no ! — Why ? repeat it with whom ? Lawrence, fu — fu — nurseryman and kitchen-gardener, that is not you ?”

“It is my father !”

“You are not a gentleman, then ? They said fu — fu — that you were of good family !”

“I am of good family, with all deference to you.”

“Then, — don’t understand —”

And his stupefaction found vent in a humming so prolonged, that I profited by it to shrug my shoulders and retire.

Before the door I encountered one of the lieutenants who had been my accomplice at the regatta, and he detained me to chat about my duel for quarter of an hour. I was on the point of leaving him, having bidden him adieu, when we heard a strange and mysterious duet issue from the apartment on the ground-floor ; it was the whistling of two persons, who seemed to repeat a lesson, sometimes replying to each other, and sometimes joining in concert.

“The Captain is out of danger,” said the young officer to me ; “he

whistles with his brother; I recognize his *fu fu*."

"How! you are sure? Day before yesterday he was as good as dead, and to-day he hums?"

"It is even so. When he was three quarters dead he whistled mentally, I'll be bound; and when he is really dead he will whistle in eternity."

"But in his present condition his idiot of a brother, instead of exciting him, ought to keep him quiet!"

"If you believe that either of them knows what he is about, you attribute more sense to them than they ever had. This muffled imitation of a flute, this collection of musical scraps, has been given them by Providence, to conceal from their own eyes, and to reveal to those of others, the absolute emptiness of their minds."

It was thus that I separated from the Vachard whom I had run through, but who has never sought his revenge.

Now, monsieur, I shall soon arrive at the principal events of my recital, and I will pass over in silence that mass of adventures, disagreeable or ludicrous, which occur daily in the life of travellers, in that of actors more particularly. Of all nomads, we observe the closest and laugh the most at human life, because we seek everywhere for types to reproduce and exaggerate. Every ridiculous or eccentric person is a model who unwittingly poses for us. Comedians find an ample and continual harvest to reap. Serious actors, especially the lovers, are less favored. They can study manner,

expression, costume, and accent; but they very seldom have an opportunity (if they ever have it) of seeing acted and of hearing spoken the passion which they desire to express with charm or energy. One circumstance in their favor, however, is that they are generally endowed with very little intelligence, and are content with attitudes and intonations stereotyped and learned by heart. Unfortunately for me, I had a little good sense and reflection, and I found this fashion of speaking like everybody else a mere jugglery of all serious work and true inspiration. I told my trouble to Bellamare.

"You are right," he answered; "I can only teach you the notes with which one can repeat his playing, when he cannot grasp the chord. Each person should express according to his own nature, and the great artists are those who are all powerful in themselves. Know yourself, try yourself, and risk yourself."

I made vain efforts. I was filled with passion, but I could express it on the stage no more than in real life. This necessity of concealing love from her who inspired it was, perhaps, too great a sacrifice of my will, too great a sacrifice of myself. I could not find in fiction the accent which my inmost emotion wanted. At Beaugency, where I made my second essay, I did not regain the spirit which had animated me at Orleans, on the day of my duel. I was, according to my comrades, very good, that is to say, according to myself, very mediocre. I had improved in one respect, however, I had rid myself of the air

of impertinence or *ennui*. I acted suitably; if my rôle had a shade of timidity, I rendered it naturally; in short, I had found the *air* which became my age and my character. I had grown supportable, but I must remain insignificant; and the worst of the matter, was that Bellamare was satisfied with it, and all my companions sided with him. They loved me; they had begun to love me too well, to ask me only to stay with them, and not to see my faults.

This was also Impéria's frame of mind. I was too handsome, she declared, to displease the public. I was too good and too amiable for the company to be able to dispense with me.

As to the present, my object was attained. I had dreamed only of living near her, without being disagreeable to her; but as regarded the future, I saw not the slightest prospect of the fortune or renown which would have permitted me to aspire to be her support, and I must live on, from day to day, very gay, very spoiled, very happy, and at heart very hopeless.

On leaving Beaugency a very romantic adventure happened to me, which left its trace upon my life. I can relate it to you, without compromising any one, as you will see.

We were to go on to Tours, without stopping at Blois, where another company was in operation at that time. Léon asked Bellamare if he was willing to leave him in that town for a day or two. He had a friend there, who urged him to spend twenty-four hours with him. Bellamare replied that he could refuse nothing to so devoted a *pensionnaire*,

and that, besides, he also counted on stopping at Blois. Impéria asked to pass the night at the hotel, to take care of Anna, who had found herself quite seriously indisposed on leaving Beaugency, and needed a little rest.

The remainder of the troupe continued on their way toward Tours, under the direction of Moranbois. Bellamare installed himself with the two young actresses, in a hotel of the lower town; and Léon insisted on my taking up my quarters with him at the house of his friend, who would be pleased to know me and to entertain me. I accepted on condition that I should go there after the performance, and that he should not present me to his friend until the next morning; Bellamare had allowed me also twenty-four hours' leisure.

"Do not stand on ceremony," Léon said to me; "my friend is a bachelor, and you will be perfectly free at his house. At any hour of the night that you present yourself with your valise, the *concierge* will admit you and show you to your room. I will warn him, and he will expect you without waiting for you."

He gave me the address, and some directions, after which he left me. I was curious to see the acting of the troupe that occupied the town, and to know if other provincial lovers were better or worse than I. They were worse, which was little consolation. During the performance a fearful storm swept over the town, and it was still raining in torrents when we left the theatre amid a great confusion of carriages and umbrellas.

In the lobby of the theatre I met

a young artist whom I had known somewhat at Paris, and who took me to a neighboring *café* to await the end of the shower. He even offered to share his room with me, which was very near the theatre, and tried to dissuade me from seeking my lodging in the old town behind the hill, in the lost quarters, as he said, where it would be very difficult to direct me. I feared lest Léon, despite his promise, had taken the trouble to await me, and, as soon as the sky had grown a little clearer, I hastened in search of No. 23 of the street specified, whose name, with your permission, I will not speak.

I was indeed compelled to search for some time, to ascend I know not how many perpendicular flights of steps, to descend several others, and find my way at random in the picturesque, narrow, sombre, and completely deserted streets. The clock on an old church was striking one in the morning, when I at last ascertained that I was in the wished-for street, before the door of No. 23. Was it really 23? Was it not 25? I was about to ring, when a wicket was opened as if some one had heard me coming. Some one looked out at me; the door also was opened, and an old servant, whose face even I did not see, asked me, in a low voice, "Is it you?"

"It is I, certainly," I replied; "the friend whom they expect."

"Hush! hush!" she answered; "follow me."

I thought that everybody was asleep, or that there was some one sick in the house, and I followed my guide on tiptoe. She wore list shoes,

and walked like a phantom, her face veiled by her white cap. I ascended after her a winding staircase of the renaissance style, dimly lighted by a night-lamp, but seemingly of exquisite workmanship. I was in one of those ancient, well-preserved houses which form the interest and ornament of provincial towns,—of Blois in particular. At the first landing the old woman paused, opened a door with a delicately wrought lock, and said to me, "Enter, and above all do not go out."

"Never?" said I, laughing.

"Hush! hush!" she replied with a fearful tone, placing one finger on her lips.

Then I saw her pale and austere face, which appeared fantastic to me, and which faded into the shadow of the staircase like a dream.

"Evidently," thought I, "there is in this charming mansion a person at the point of death. This will not be cheerful, but perhaps I may be of some assistance to Léon at this painful moment."

And I penetrated into an apartment delicious in form, carving, and furniture. I reckoned on finding Léon there. I stepped noiselessly across an antechamber which preceded a delightful drawing-room, or rather boudoir, where there was a fire, an agreeable precaution in this stormy weather, which had drenched and chilled me; wax tapers burned in the candelabra, two great arm-chairs of rare design occupied the chimney-corners; but their cushions of Tours brocade, fresh and rounded, did not indicate that any one had sat there recently. The rich furniture,

arranged with scrupulous care, had the appearance of a residence long unoccupied. The lustre flashed its crystals discreetly, beneath a covering of silver gauze. The lace ruffles and covers on the arm-chairs were irreproachably white and stiff. Two pretty glass cupboards containing, one Chinese knick-knacks, the other little ornaments of old Saxony ware, were closed and locked. There was a work-table, denoting a woman's sojourn, whether transient or permanent; but this piece of furniture was empty, not a particle of thread or silk remained attached to its velvet lining.

At the back of the boudoir I saw a tapestry curtain which faced the chimney-piece, and which I lifted cautiously. Nothing but obscurity and silence. I took a taper, and penetrated into the most delicious sleeping-room that I had ever seen. It was blue, all hung with azure silk damask finished with fringes of white silk. A bed, white and gold, with fringed canopy and ample curtains of the same color and material as the hangings, occupied, like a monument, nearly one whole side of the chamber, which was not large, but was very lofty. Opposite the bed a mantel-piece of white marble, embossed with gilded copper, supported a timepiece in the Louis XVI. style, and of rare elegance; candlesticks with three branches, white and gold, like the clock; and two white marble Loves, which must have been the work of some quaint and skilful master. A commode, a secretary, and *étagères* of rosewood, with medallions of old Sèvres, a little sofa of

Chinese satin, two or three arm-chairs marvellously embroidered by hand, a red-brown carpet, sprinkled over with delicate sprays, a Venetian mirror in its frame of diamonded flowers, two large pastels representing beautiful ladies, very *décolletée*, and who had a right to be so; I know not what beside; exquisite nothings placed on all the brackets; — all marked the sleeping-room of a woman, wealthy, artistic, fastidious, and elegant, — voluptuous, perhaps.

When I had made the inventory of this too comfortable asylum, I wondered if it had really been destined for me, and if the old house-keeper had not committed the monstrous blunder of introducing me there in the place of some marchioness.

Then I remembered that Léon had wealthy parents, that he had lived in the aristocratic world, and had friends in high life, and that the one whose hospitality I was receiving, being a bachelor and independent, there was nothing wonderful in his having fitted up a fine apartment in his elegant mansion for the use of some extravagant mistress, or some person of higher station, who came occasionally to his house for a mysterious rendezvous.

But why the deuse had they thus honored a poor strolling player, drenched and muddy, who would have been contented with a cross-bed in an attic, without descending from his usual habits? It seemed to me like an ironical magnificence. Had they no more modest lodging to offer a modest visitor in this princely house? Was it the apartment especially designed for friends? In

that case Léon should occupy it, and I began to look about for a second sleeping-room locked with the same key.

There was none. I resolved to install myself there gayly, convinced that I should discover next day that the housekeeper had lost her wits. It was her affair, and not mine: I was weary, I was cold, and my slight wound was somewhat painful, and my first astonishment giving place to the need of rest and sleep, I seated myself on the sofa, touched a match to the pile of kindlings heaped up in the fireplace, and began to take off my shoes, whose dusty-white prints I was ashamed to leave upon the carpet.

While regarding the reflection of the bed in the Venetian mirror, inclined toward me, I noticed that the silk counterpane had not been turned back, and there was nothing to indicate that this handsome couch was not merely for ornament. I raised the folds of damask, and perceived that there were neither sheets nor blankets on the mattress of white satin. This made me consider again. Evidently this luxurious lodging had not been designed for me, or surely there was a more modest bed somewhere within the reach of simple mortals. In vain I sought for it. Nothing in the dressing-closets; no alcove hidden in the wall; nothing to lie down on, unless the normal occupant of the blue room was a tiny lady capable of compressing herself within the limits of the little Chinese satin sofa. But as I already measured five feet five inches in height, there was no hope for me, even if I occupied

the whole of it, and I resigned myself, at first, to sleeping in a sitting posture; but after five minutes I was too warm, and stretched myself out on the carpet, in the middle of the chamber; five minutes later I was too cold. Decidedly, my scratch made me a little feverish; I found that Léon's proffered hospitality was a sorry jest, and forbidding me to leave the apartment appeared to me like the transparent stamp of a hoax. Still, Léon was not facetious. So absolute a silence reigned throughout the house, that one would have thought it deserted. The same silence in the street. The moon now fully lighted up this sloping road, which descended in windings, bordered by walls overhung by wide-branched trees. The gardens were interspersed here and there by houses, which seemed to grow smaller and smaller, by reason of the declivity; there was no chance at night to distinguish between ancient hotels and modern villas, our age not having invented a characteristic architecture.

I dared not open the window, for I might still suppose that there was the precious sleep of illness to be regarded. But I saw very distinctly through the blue glass, and the picture I contemplated received a fantastic brightness from it, like that of an operatic moonlight. There were no shutters, the renaissance windows being in prismatic cross-bars. The lindens, all in blossom, lifted their great round heads above the wall in front; a little farther off, a vine-clad arbor was supported by pilasters on a terrace; on the right, a little struc-

ture, which might be a porter's lodge, resembled an antique tomb. I know not why this empty, silent street, with its low edifices, its elegant forms, and its squares of greenery, made me fancy how a suburb of Pompeii or a part of Tusculum must once have looked, seen in the gray of the morning. As a distant clock was striking half past one I decided to roll myself in my travelling-blanket, and stretch myself upon the satin mattress, drawing over me the vast counterpane, by which means I found myself most comfortably established, and fell speedily into that agreeable wandering which precedes a sweet sleep.

It was the first time in my life that I had occupied so rich and so downy a couch; it would probably be the last; I was not sorry to inhale the perfume of this elegant wealth and refined taste. The fire continued to crackle, and to cast great waves of light over the pictures, furniture, and ceiling, which last was painted to simulate light clouds upon a rosy sky. Gradually the fire died down, and clothed the whole with a soft and luminous atmosphere, which must have resembled the famous azure grotto. I asked myself if the influence of some kindred association might not have caused my dream. I recalled the farm-house where I had grown up; the great family-room with rough beams for a ceiling, whence hung clusters of shining onions and scarlet tomatoes by way of lustres; the walls covered with stew-pans and basins of gleaming copper; the noises which broke in upon my first sleep; the rocking of

the children's cradles; the dogs that barked in the court-yard, when the oxen stirred in the stable, or when a distant wagoner passed by, whose heavy cart crushed the gravel in regular cadence, and whose horses walking with equal step made the bells on their collars sing *do fa do re mi do*. Again I saw my mother, and the three poor children, younger than myself, who died in the same year; my father, still young, putting me to bed, while my mother nursed the last-born and drawing over my face the great rough linen sheet, which would prevent me from being disturbed by flies that might be earlier astir than I.

"Here," thought I, "there are no flies, but there are no sheets."

And I wondered naïvely if it was the custom of grandees to do without them. At every question that I asked myself I felt the heaviness of sleep, which replied with supreme unconcern, "What matter?" A clear and silvery sound awoke me; it was the voice of a nightingale, perched in the garden opposite, which came to me through the glass and the curtains with a slender ray of moonlight. I said to myself that the bird, an eloquent artist, without taking any trouble, and without fear of failure, a satisfied lover and accepted protector, was happier on his branch than I upon the satin and the down; and I slept again profoundly, so profoundly that I did not hear some one enter the next room, and was aroused only by a noise of tongs with which the drawing-room fire was being stirred.

Some sudden insight restrained

me from calling out, "Léon, is it you?" Had I slept long? My fire was burned out; the moon now shone before my window, one of whose curtains I had left a little raised. I sprang up and walked noiselessly to the tapestry door, which separated me from the boudoir, and which I drew aside a hair's breadth to take a cautious survey. My anticipation was realized. A woman of elegant appearance, richly dressed in black, and wearing a lace veil, had taken possession of the apartment. Was it the marchioness of my expectations? It was impossible for me to see her face, which was turned aside from the mantel-piece, and was not reflected by the mirror, placed very high, to agree with its surroundings; but through the black lace I distinguished a head of splendid blond hair, and a magnificent neck. The figure was supple, slight without being fragile, the movements youthful, confident, and graceful. I perceived all this, for she raised her arm to extinguish the tapers, still burning in the candelabra; she drew one arm-chair from the chimney-corner, brought the other nearer, and put a cushion under her feet. The only illumination now was that of a single taper, overshadowed by a little blue capital. She seated herself with a weary air, and disappeared in the depths of the great arm-chair, leaving in sight only the silhouette of her charming foot before the fire. A little Russia leather bag and a large travelling-wrap of English waterproof cloth were placed on the round table. No other package, no waiting-maid, no member of the

household, taking the trouble to receive her. Evidently, it was an intimate friend, with whom they used no ceremony, to whom they had said as to me, "Come when you please, you will trouble no one, and no one will trouble himself." Some near relative of the master, a sister perhaps? A mistress; certainly not, he would not have left her alone.

Whoever she was, she was there, she was cold, she followed my example and warmed herself before going to bed. What would she think of that bed without sheets or blankets, which had puzzled me so much? That was not my concern; but what caused me a very serious perplexity was the other surprise that awaited her,—that of finding a previous occupant in this blue chamber on which she seemed to count implicitly, since she did not take the pains to examine it in advance, as I had done.

One does not think to profit by such a situation when one is twenty, and bears with him all the bashfulness and modesty of an ideal love. I felt only dread of the approaching scene; the shrieks of the woman believing in an ambush, the absurdity of my apparent boldness, the arousing of my host, hastening in the direction of her cries, the laughter or reproaches, who could tell? A ridiculous situation for me, painful for the lady, embarrassing for the master of the house. In an instant I turned over in my dizzy head all the means of escaping without exposure; to retreat by the window was dangerous, but possible; only it must be opened, this window, and the lady

would cry, "Thieves!" It would be still worse if I concealed myself under the bed or in the curtains. I had had leisure to ascertain that there was no egress from the dressing-closet. I could arrive at only one decision, which was to show myself at once, and explain all immediately, hastening to yield the place to her. This was what I was about to do, and was preparing for it, when the lady started at the sound of a footstep coming from the anteroom, and ran to meet the new arrival. I profited by this diversion to rearrange the bed, to take my travelling-bag and blanket, and put on my shoes again, that I might not be surprised in the very act of house-breaking.

I had not yet finished these speedy preparations, and was still seated on the sofa, drawing on my boots with a nervous hand, when I heard in the boudoir the sound of a voice too peculiar to leave me in doubt for a moment; it was the voice of Bellamare. While complicating the problem still further, this unlooked-for circumstance reassured me. The lady, not finding herself alone with me, would have no fear, and on my side, I knew that Bellamare would explain my presence so quickly and so well, that there would not be a moment's suspicion of the purity of my intentions. Besides, who knew if this person meant to stay, and if this were not merely a business appointment? Theatrical affairs are sometimes conducted with the most cautious secrecy. I resolved to await the end of the overture and not to listen; but the silence about us was so profound, and the wainscoted

boudoir so resonant, that, in spite of the care the lady took to subdue her voice, it was impossible for me to lose a word of the dialogue, which I will try to give you, word for word.

"You were admitted without having to wait, were you not, Monsieur Bellamare?"

"And without being questioned; yes, madame, with the recommendation not to make a noise."

"Yes, on account of the next house, No. 23, which is occupied at present."

"I know it. Two of my actors are staying there."

"Two? ah heavens! who?"

"I presume that you know neither of them."

"I know them all. I have followed your performances to Orleans and Beaugency. Is it M. Léon?"

"Yes, madame, Léon and Lawrence."

"What a singular coincidence! I am so confused — I do not know if I shall have the courage to tell you, now — Heavens! how extraordinary my conduct must seem to you! What an opinion you must have of me!"

"I am a man who has seen so many extraordinary things, that he has ceased to be astonished at anything; and as to my opinion, it ought not to disturb you. I have not the honor of your acquaintance; I know neither your name nor your condition, neither your country nor your residence, since you are not at home here; neither your age nor your face, since you conceal it from me by a veil. I understood perfectly that it concerned an affair of the heart, and

did not for a moment suppose you were enamored of my forty years and sunburned visage. Your letter was urgent and charming. I am kind-hearted and obliging; I came. You have requested secrecy; I make a point of justifying your confidence. So I am here at your service; speak; come to the point, without fear. The nights are short at this season; lose no time, if you fear to be seen on leaving the house."

"You seem so good to me, and I know you to be so delicate, that I will take courage. I love a young man who is a member of your troupe."

"Lawrence or Léon?"

"Lawrence."

"He deserves to be loved; he is a brave and worthy fellow."

"I know it; I have obtained all the information possible about him. I witnessed his *début*: he pleased me. He did not display his talent to advantage that evening; he was confused. His face awoke my sympathy; his voice went to my heart. Another evening I saw him again, and he was admirable; he made me tremble and weep. I felt that I loved him madly; but this secret would never have left my heart, had it not been for the events which followed this performance."

"The duel with Captain Vachard?"

"Precisely. I know this Vachard: he wished to address me; he was ill received, for he was inexpressibly disagreeable to me. Wounded by the bluntness of my refusal, he slandered me. It is his habit; he is a dishonorable man. He then became odious to me, although he had

done me no injury. My life is without reproach, I might even say without emotion, and no one who knew me credited his falsehoods; but the men of the present day have lost the chivalric instinct; and among those who were my natural defenders there was not one who dared say to this soldier, "You have lied!" The lesson he deserved must needs be given him in connection with another woman, an actress, and by a very young man. I resolved, from that moment, to struggle no longer against the passion with which the artist had inspired me, and to make his fortune and his happiness, — if he would consent!"

"The deuse! 'fortune and happiness'; when one can unite those two extremes, one always consents!"

"Stay! It was not for me that he fought. I have been informed of all the particulars; it was for a comrade, for this charming Impéria, with whom I should be in love, were I a man, and whom I have applauded since then just the same, and with all my heart. I am good-natured, and I know how to be just. If these young people love each other, as it is very possible and very natural to suppose, keep my secret. I have told you nothing; and as for me, I will be resigned; I will conquer myself; I will have hoped nothing, felt nothing; but if, as some say, there is absolutely nothing between them, if Lawrence merely wished to make the dignity of the artist respected in her, you who must know the truth, you whose character and reputation are of the

greatest weight in my eyes, you will reassure me, and assist me in making myself known."

"The last version is the true one. Impéria is a person of perfect purity, and even somewhat shy. She confides in me as if I were her father. If Lawrence had spoken of love to her, and if she had loved him, she would have taken me for confidant and adviser. If he had spoken of love to her, and she had not responded to it, she would, perhaps, have concealed it from me; but she would have treated him with coldness and distrust, whereas I see a peaceful and lively friendship existing between them."

"You are sure, then, that he does not love her?"

"I think I may be sure of it. I can ascertain by observing him, without saying anything, or by questioning him in your behalf."

"In my behalf? O no, certainly not yet! You must first know who I am. I am twenty-four years old; I am the daughter of an artist who left me some fortune; I married a man of rank who had none, who did not make me happy, and who left me a widow at nineteen. I went to live with my father again, who also died, last year, leaving me alone in the world, and since then I have lived in retirement. I am still in mourning. I adored my father, and swore that if I ever married again, I would wed an artist, and that I would marry only for love. I have the right; I have the means, as they say, vulgarly; I have twenty thousand francs a year, and all the elegant comfort that my father knew

how to create for himself. My husband did not have time to squander my dowry. So I can choose, and I have chosen. It is for you to learn if I am worthy of being happy and capable of being loved. Ascertain; my name and address are on this card. I fear no inquiries. As for my person, you must judge of that, also; I remove my veil."

At this word, without thinking of my situation, I sprang from the sofa, which creaked feebly, and would have betrayed my presence, if a quick exclamation from Bellamare had not covered this slight noise.

"Ah my Lady Countess," cried he, after having glanced at the card, probably, "you are as beautiful as Lawrence is handsome, and you would be very wrong to doubt your omnipotence."

I was behind the curtain; I tried to draw it aside; my hand trembled; when I succeeded in venturing a peep, it was too late; the accursed black veil, cruelly thick, was replaced upon the head and shoulders of my Galatea. I stayed there, not daring to look longer, for, if her back was turned to me, Bellamare, seated in the corner opposite, was so situated that he could see the tapestry move. So, standing as if petrified, I heard the remainder of the dialogue.

"I am glad that my face pleases you, Monsieur Bellamare; you will tell him, when the time comes, that I am not ugly."

"O the deuse!" replied Bellamare, naïvely, well knowing that the spontaneous expression of conviction never offends a woman; "you are dis-

tractingly beautiful! Come! I will do what you wish. I will make inquiries cautiously."

"Yes, very cautiously, but very conscientiously, I insist upon it; and when you are convinced that I am a serious person, who, after much *canui*, reason, and virtue, has admitted into her heart and head a lively affection and a noble folly, you will help me to make my hand accepted by him whom I have chosen for my husband."

"You know that Lawrence is at most but one-and-twenty?"

"I know it."

"That his father is a peasant?"

"I know it."

"That he loves the theatre passionately?"

"I know it."

"Very well. I cannot tell you that your choice is reasonable, according to the world; you have, yourself, passed sentence on it and judged it; you must have foreseen *what the world will say about it?*"

"Perfectly; do you blame me?"

"I blame love, devotion, courage, and unselfishness! On the contrary, I should like to kneel before you, madame, and even to tell you that, in my opinion, you have taken the path of wisdom. I have always seen that what is commonly called so leads to deception and regret; but here is the daylight, I believe, and I should do well to withdraw—"

"No, no! Monsieur Bellamare, it is I who must retreat very quickly, for I wish to take the train that leaves in an hour."

"Do you go to Tours?"

"No. I shall follow you no longer

in your journey. Now that my mind is at rest, I shall wait, at my country house, until you write to me and tell me: 'I have gained the information you desire; Lawrence's heart is entirely free; it is time to act.' Then, in whatever place you may be, you will see me arrive. Adieu, and Heaven bless you for the good that you have done me. I leave in your hands the care of my honor and my pride. I have your word, Lawrence shall know nothing?"

"I swear it."

"Farewell again. I am going away by the gardens behind the house. This house belongs to a friend of mine who is travelling, and must know nothing. A worthy woman, who was destitute, and whom I have had installed as guardian here, will come directly to let you out. She is entirely devoted to me, and will not betray me."

Bellamare conducted the Countess to the door of the anteroom. When he returned to the boudoir he started with surprise on seeing me seated in the place he had just left.

III.

"With your permission," said Lawrence, "I will interrupt my story for a while. If it has not wearied you, I can continue it, with as much exactness and sincerity as I have succeeded in doing up to this point. My reminiscences are very fresh, because they were very simple, and recurred to an exclusive preoccupation. After the adventure of the blue room, this preoccupation was divided, and I need to find the clew

to the labyrinth, in which I was, for a long time, lost."

"That is to say," I remarked to Lawrence, "that you loved the beautiful Countess and the charming actress at the same time?"

"Yes and no, no and yes; perhaps, how do I know? You will assist me to read my feelings clearly. Would you like to walk a little way? I am not used to remaining so in one place, and thinking so long about myself."

"Let us return to the town," said I; "share my dinner, and we will resume your recital this evening, or to-morrow, if you please."

He accepted, but on condition that I should go to his father's house with him, as he had not seen him during the day, and feared lest he might be anxious about him. We descended the mountain quickly, and, following the rapid course of the Volpie, we were soon upon the plain. Lawrence took me straight across the magnificent meadows, to the faubourg of the town, which was not much more squalid and ugly than the town itself. Between two stately walls of manure, we reached the house and grounds of Father Lawrence, which had nothing poetical about them, I assure you. The absence of any woman was perceptible in all the details of the yard and the interior, for one could not apply the name of woman to the old virago who was performing her household labors, while giving an occasional glance or turn to the pot upon the fire. The garden alone was well kept, and we found the elder Lawrence there engaged in digging a bed. He was a man of

seventy, well preserved and remarkably handsome, but without expression and deaf as a post. He could exchange with his son alone the few ideas he seemed to have, for Lawrence replied to all his questions without raising his voice, and accompanying his words with a somewhat mysterious pantomime arranged between them. He understood that I was a friendly visitor, and that I should feel much interest in his vegetables, for he did not spare me the description of a single root, and related minutely, in an incomprehensible *patois*, the story of all his horticultural essays. Unable to communicate my impressions to him, I bore the infliction patiently, seeing Lawrence catch up the spade, and hastily complete the bed begun by his father.

"You must pardon me," he said, "I had not done my task to-day, and my poor old man would have worked too much, for he never complains, and often punishes me by doing double duty."

I asked him if this was an absolute necessity.

"No," he replied, "we have enough to live on, without fatiguing ourselves; but my father has a passion for the ground, and if he gave it a moment's rest, he would think that he had committed a crime towards it. He is a genuine peasant, as you see, and outside his garden the world does not exist. The manure that we heap up around us is the horizon by which his thought is bounded, and within it are enclosed treasures of activity, patience, practical intelligence, prudence, and resignation. If you passed a day with him, you

would love him in spite of yourself. He has every virtue, — gentleness, chastity, charity, self-sacrifice. He does not understand what I have relinquished in returning to share his life; but if it were necessary to make a greater sacrifice for me, he would not hesitate. In short, monsieur, I respect and love him with all my heart. I was very glad to show you his handsome face, and tell you what I think of him, before resuming my story. It is a good hour yet before you dine. We shall be quiet here, it is the day after the wedding, and all my companions are fatigued. I will conduct you to my tiny oasis, for I have one which consoles me for the monotony of my occupations and my habitation."

He led the way to the back of the enclosure, which was spread out, in a gentle slope, upon the side of the hill, and was surrounded by walls high enough to intercept the view.

"Formerly, our enclosure was charming," said Lawrence to me; "it commanded an admirable country, and when, on returning from my last absence, my father proudly showed me this rampart that converted it into a tomb, saying, 'I hope that you will enjoy yourself here now,' I was seized with a frightful chagrin; but he was so proud of his enclosure and his young fruit-trees, that I said nothing; only, I reserved for myself the part you are about to see, — a bit of earth the size of a pocket-handkerchief, but which is my delight, because nothing in it has been touched and spoiled."

He opened a little gate, whose key he had about him, and we found our-

selves upon a narrow strip of uncultivated ground which was supported by a bank of great rocks.

"This is only the upper part," he said, when I had admired the view; "I possess the lower portion also. Descend a little cautiously."

He disappeared between two blocks of stone; I followed him, and we descended perpendicularly from projection to projection, till we reached a little torrent which glided along a rocky channel, without other noise than a mysterious murmuring. We were in a sort of natural oval well, for at the two extremities the rock united in such a way that it formed an arch above the running water, and the margin of the excavation was covered with a charming vegetation. The soil of the kitchen garden probably oozed through its walls, and the rains carried thither, in spite of the partition, the choicest of its earth and seeds, for the cultivated plants were intermingled there with the wild flora which had attained unwonted proportions. In the bottom, the spicy arum, the elegant papyrus, the wonderfully graceful cotton-aster intertwined themselves, or grew side by side, with water-plantains, caltrops, water-lilies, and alimas, which had sprung up of their own free will in a limpid pool, a sort of spring or drainage of the land, placed like a moveless diamond a little above the bed of the running stream.

The whole extent was extremely limited, but of considerable depth, and nature had embellished it with so much beauty and luxuriance that I was charmed.

"I call this my Lethe," said Law-

rence; "it is a gulf of flowers, rocks, moss, and wild plants, where I come to forget the past, when it tortures me too much. I lose myself in the contemplation of a cluster of wild roses, or a tuft of grass, and I imagine that I have never lived otherwise than as the stones and leaves; they are happy as possible, living in their natural state, and not tormented in their passive existence. Why should not I be as glad as they, I, who in addition, possess the faculty of knowing my happiness? But I cannot long remain so; I feel that while my will says *Yes*, the cowardly tears that fall upon my idle hands say *No*!"

"Then let us not remain here. Do not relate your sorrows here; perhaps they would destroy forever the virtue of your *Lethe*."

"Who knows? perhaps it will produce the opposite effect. The thoughts we strive to banish always return most obstinately. Stay; to-morrow I may not have the courage to continue my story, and I know that you must leave us at an early day. Let us swallow the bitter beverage at one draught!"

And the gardener's son, having washed his earth-stained hands in the stream, thus resumed the history of his dramatic life.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF A ROLLING STONE.

THE SHIPWRECK.

I left you in the boudoir attached to the blue room, Bellamare returning for his hat, myself issuing from behind the tapestry curtain, and appear-

ing to him like the statue of the commander.

He was surprised, uneasy, disturbed; these emotions passed rapidly over his expressive countenance, and resolved themselves irresistibly into an immense burst of laughter.

"You understand," said I, "that I came here firmly persuaded that I was entering No. 23; I was imprisoned; I understood nothing; I slept —"

"And you heard nothing?"

"I heard everything. I saw the lady, but with her veil down; I guessed at the figure, I could not see the face."

"So much the worse for you, — a marvel! a blond *Fornarina*!"

"You are enamored of her, my dear manager?"

"Disinterestedly enamored."

"You would not marry her?"

"Certainly not."

"Why?"

"You do not know, then, that I am already married?"

"On my honor, no."

"I am, and charmed to be so, because if I were not I might perhaps have a fancy for marriage, and meet with even worse luck."

"Your wife —"

"Is at the devil, I don't know where; but we have nothing to do with her. I am charged to sound you cautiously. Fate laughs at the precautions of the adorable Countess. Now I have only to question you, but not in this house, which is neither ours nor hers. I know you to be honorable, I have no need to recommend silence. Let us go out quietly, and do not visit the next

house now. Come to my hotel: we will talk of the matter on our way."

The old woman who let us out testified no curiosity, said not a word to us, and closed the door noiselessly. When we had gone far enough not to disturb the stillness of this mysterious street into which the daylight began to steal, Bellamare said to me: "Ah well, here is a pretty *début* in your love career! I can tell you nothing; since you know all, my commission is at an end. It remains for you to consider, and ask yourself if you are willing that this first adventure of your life should be the last one; for that is the lady's intention, and she has a right to demand it. What answer shall I give her?"

"You would do better to advise me than to question me," said I; "I cannot be in love with a woman whom I have not seen, and I am so surprised and confused, that I have not an idea in my head. What should you think in my place?"

"Shall I tell you how I reasoned, under similar circumstances?"

"Yes, I beg you will do so."

"I was young, and no handsomer than I am now, but passionately fond of women, and women are always attracted by these earnest natures. So I had a very fair success, but a success as peculiar as my face and mind. An English lady possessed of millions, whose niece I had saved from drowning, in a passage across Lake Geneva, fancied that she loved me, and wished to be loved in return. I asked nothing better, although I should have preferred the niece; but the niece, with the eyes of fifteen,

thought me very ugly, and the aunt, who had somewhat passed her thirtieth year, wished to bind and enrich me by marriage. I shunned the question as much as possible; but when I saw that she clung to it with the obstinacy that these islanders display in their eccentricities, I packed my portmanteau, and slipped off, in the early dawn, from the gardens of Armida. I never heard of my lady afterward, who was, for all that, a handsome and amiable creature; and I preferred to wed a little Columbine, of whom I was enamored, but who forsook me for a Lindor from Toulouse, who used to say to the dresser when going on the stage, *Dónez-moi mes bôtes môles*. I was very wrong to marry this dancer, but I was very right in preferring her to the virtuous and romantic Englishwoman. Columbine, by regaining her liberty, did not deprive me of mine. By preferring an ass to me, she did not take away my mind; in short, by appreciating neither my talent nor my heart, she has left intact my heart and my talent."

"I understand," said I; "a woman who had given you fortune and respectability would have exercised over you morally a right of life and death."

"And the more sweetness she displayed in monopolizing and subduing me, the more fettered and enslaved I should feel, because I am, like you, kind and loyal; but how unhappy I should have been in the padded cage of social observance! A comic actor who is not as absurd in his private life as on the boards soon turns to melancholy and sui-

cide. In short, I have rejected wealth, and more than once under other forms than that of marriage. I never would have chains. Everybody thinks that I have been wrong; but as for me, I justify myself, because I still feel young and joyous. Do not tell me your opinion as far as I am concerned; that is of no use; think of your own particular case. You are handsome, and not a comedian. The person whose heart you have gained appears as seriously in love as possible; you are not yet sufficiently launched in the theatrical life to leave it with ineffaceable regret. Perhaps you are ambitious without knowing it, and capable of playing your part upon the stage of real life. If it be so, marry, my dear boy, marry! Life is a hillside; it is the destiny of some to descend into the plains, where gold and wheat abound; of others to ascend to the sterile rocks, where they reap only the wind and the clouds. Put your mind through a course of gymnastics; you will see whether it is light or heavy, if it inclines toward the practical or lets itself be blown away by the idle breeze. And on this, let us go and take a nap."

I followed him without replying, uncertain and weary. I threw myself upon a bed, and found no escape from my perplexities.

Bellamare slept for several hours, and then prepared to leave with Impéria and Anna, who was entirely recovered.

"I leave you here, free until tomorrow," he said to me; "go find Léon and see the lions of the city with him. And you can even ask

his advice, without mentioning No. 25 to him, and without giving him any particular, any hint, which might chance to lead him to guess the person afterwards. For the rest, Léon is as safe as myself; he is a serious young man, a mind of lofty temper. His opinion ought to have more weight with you than mine."

"Will you not tell me the name of the Countess?"

"Never, unless she authorizes me to do so. At present, I am charged, if you remember, to ascertain if your heart is free. Is it, yes or no?"

At that moment Impéria came out of her room, carrying her little carpet-bag, all worn and faded, and gathering together the folds of her small travelling-cloak, to cover up her dress, frayed at the armholes. The contrast of this modest poverty with the opulence of the lady whom I had caught a glimpse of through her rich laces occurred to me like a revelation of my true instinct. Was I ambitious? Was I susceptible to the spell of luxury, so dazzling to eyes not wont to view it? Was poverty repugnant to me? Could my imagination conceive of an enjoyment of riches capable of making me forget the cherished image of my little comrade? My soul cried *no* with all its might and all its spontaneity.

"Ah well," continued Bellamare in a low voice, "I ask if your heart is free? Are you deaf?"

"Upon my word," I answered in an undertone, "the Countess is too curious."

Bellamare took me by the arm, withdrew me two or three steps from

Impéria, and said to me, "If you care for this one, you cannot care for the other?"

I dared not impart my secret to Bellamare. I dreaded too much lest he should oppose me. I replied that I was free in every way, and that I should consider twice before renouncing so great an advantage.

"You will rejoin us to-morrow at Tours?" said Impéria, as she was entering the railway carriage; "remember that without you and Léon we shall not dare to take a step."

"Have you not *the others* and the dear manager?"

"The dear manager will be too busy with the general installations, and *the others* are very nice, but *they are not you*. Adieu! amuse yourself well, and do not forget us."

She departed, regarding me with so purely affectionate an expression, that the emotion of the blue room appeared like an empty dream. One would have said Impéria had divined my situation, and I persuaded myself that her eyes said to me, "Do not love any other than me."

I did not speak of these things to Léon. Since I was no longer undecided, I had no reason to consult him. I talked to him only of himself. His friend of No. 23 was a scion of good family, serious and well informed enough for a man of leisure. We visited the castle of Blois together, whose history he related to us, interspersed with interesting details. That evening he invited us to spend with him, and have a cosy chat over our punch and excellent cigars. It was in this quiet conversation that I understood,

for the first time, the mysterious pre-occupation of Léon.

Léon was no longer a boy: he was thirty-two; he had lived much and learned much in living. His ruling passion had always been the stage. He loved all its fictions, and accepted none of its realities. It was the spirit, and not the letter, that sustained him. He loved all his rôles, inasmuch as he completed them in his mind; and, very careful as to his exterior costume and make-up, he always went upon the stage persuaded that he was the character he was representing; but, at the same time, he detested all his rôles, because he did not find them conceived or written in his spirit. In short, he was too much a master to be a virtuoso, too literary to be a performer; and inwardly he never ceased to rebel against his task, unwilling to renounce it, however, and unable to think of anything but his dear and odious profession.

He wrote, as I have told you, and I was always convinced, I am still convinced, that he had genius, but the most unfortunate sort of genius that can fall to one's portion, — genius without talent. His plays were full of originality, vigorous flights, strong and simple situations; they had that stamp of grandeur and austerity of means which characterize the great masters of former times. Despite these superior qualities, they were, for the most part, unavailable; they needed to be entirely recast, and partly translated, to make the public comprehend them. Acted before ten or twelve persons of culture, they would have been found charming;

but every numerous audience represents a majority of ignorant or idle minds, who can neither study, nor compare, nor reflect, nor conjecture. In the province, above all, nothing must be left to the vulgar interpretation; when they meddle with it, they overshoot the mark, and are horribly scandalized at what would not shock serious and cultivated minds.

Léon was somewhat offended at Bellamare, because he would act only one or two of his productions, and because he had required certain alterations and sacrifices. He said that the duty of a man of intelligence and a genuine artist, like our manager, was to endeavor to instruct and form the public, to create one, if necessary, no matter where, instead of submitting to the bad taste, and subjecting himself to the ignorance of the ready-made public of every district. Bellamare had replied to these reproaches: "Give me a theatre and a grant of a hundred thousand francs, and I swear to bring out your plays, and those of all unknown authors, who give evidence of genius or of talent.—in short, those plays destined to meet with no success. I shall not put a sou in my pocket, and I shall be very happy to advance art; but, with nothing, one can do nothing."

Léon was crestfallen. He did not reproach Bellamare; he esteemed and loved him; but he reproached the age and mankind; he scorned his century, he found himself straitened by it, and dragged himself about like a condemned prisoner who has not merited his sentence. He was un-

willing to make any concession to the vulgar, and his friend of Blois encouraged him in preserving this pride in his genius. As for me, I felt that this genius was too incomplete to show itself so intolerant; but I dared not say so to him, for he said it himself, he felt it, and it was the real cause of his sadness. He thirsted for the beautiful, and knew not how to find in himself the source at which the truly gifted man refreshes himself without needing the support of others.

As for me, I was no better at Tours than at Beaugency, and Vendôme did not witness the unfolding of my artistic talent. The other towns where Bellamare gained and lost money paid no great attention to me. I was, at best, passable. I brought no disgrace upon the performance, but I added no lustre to it, and my associates deluded themselves on my account. Bellamare, always fatherly, assured me that I was useful to him. Still, I could not replace Lambesq, who was insupportable to him, and he could not discharge him till the end of our engagement. It finished without anything to justify the hope I had entertained of becoming Impéria's husband and support. She was to return to the Odéon, and I could not think of soliciting an engagement at that theatre. There were others there, it is true, as tame as I, but they came from the Conservatory. Bocage did not like them. He said that, unless endowed with a special genius, they were all marked with the same stamp, and incapable of rendering their stiff lines supple at his direction; but these people had

situations there and I had none. I did not wish to make a fruitless attempt. I hoped only to preserve my admission, that I might be near Impéria. Besides, the vacation was at hand, and my father counted on me. I parted from my comrades at Limoges, and there Bellamare proposed to engage me for the winter, which he intended to pass in the North of France, or to secure an engagement for me in some company stationed in a large city. I thanked him. I wished to resume my studies at Paris, until further orders, and not to banish myself from Impéria. Her friendship, in the absence of her love, was all my joy; and, without knowing by what path I might arrive there, I still hoped that I might offer her my life.

I gave as pretext that, before entering finally on a dramatic career, I wished to consult my family. Bellamare approved my course.

"Then that affair," he said, "is settled for the present. If you change your mind, come and rejoin me. By writing to the Odéon, you will always learn my whereabouts. For the rest, it will be sufficient to address your letters to Constant. He will forward them to me; but we have another account to dispose of. I have not spoken to you again of the Countess; you have asked me no questions regarding her; it was the duty of us both. I awaited your first move, you perhaps awaited mine; until now that we are about to separate, we must come to an understanding about her."

"Have you not written yet to this lady?"

"Certainly, I have written her the truth. I have told her that you had very unwillingly overheard her confidences, but that you were familiar neither with her name nor her face. I added that you had seemed undecided, that I had advised you to reflect, and that I would not leave you without having asked you the result of your reflections. Speak; the moment has come."

"Tell her," I replied, "that I am touched, grateful; that I was struck with her grace, even through impenetrable draperies; that I perceived the tip of a divine foot and the gold of royal tresses. Do not tell her that these tresses may be false, and that it is difficult to be in love with a woman who conceals her countenance and even the sound of her voice; but you can truly tell her that the good faith of her language filled me with confidence and respect. Yes, tell her that, for it is the truth, and the more I think of it the more esteem I feel for her. You need not add that, if she had not spoken of marriage — But this serious thing has rendered me serious, and you can conclude by saying that I am too young to accept so high a destiny without alarm. It would require excessive confidence to think myself worthy of it and to be sure of always deserving it."

"Very well," cried Bellamare, "it is worded in such a way that I could not improve upon it; but have you not in your heart a little postscript of regret, which would soften the solemnity of the refusal? For it is a refusal, there is no de-

nying it, and who knows if two or three years hence you will not repent it?"

"My dear manager, I have awaited your advice, in a state of perplexity of which you do not divine the true cause; and it is this: if you found that I really possessed talent, you would have said to me, without hesitation, 'Do not think of countesses; study your rôles!' Your silence proves to me how little faith you have in my future as an artist. So it is possible that I may commit a great folly in terminating my charming adventure by a refusal; but, without having considered the subject much, I believe that I must come to that decision, or play the part of ridiculous affectation and bad faith. I am too young for a Don Juan; I should wish in vain to abuse advantages that chance has given me over this woman; I should not know how. I prefer to confess my simplicity and console myself with her esteem."

"Very well," replied Bellamare; "it is always very well! You have truly a heart of gold, and I still hope that you may be an artist. Consult your family; it is your duty, and, if they are willing, await the time when, according to my custom, I shall pass some weeks in Paris, toward the close of the season at the Odéon. We will resume our studies by ourselves, and I have an idea that I shall develop in you all that your nature contains of good and beautiful."

I left him with tears. All my comrades clasped me in their arms; Moranbois, alone, turned his back,

shrugging his shoulders when I wished to embrace him also.

"Have I been guilty of some bad action, then?" I asked him; "you esteem me no longer."

"That is a lie," replied he in his most contemptuous tone. "I am idiot enough to love you, but you are a brute to leave us at the moment when we become attached to you. That is the way with young folks! Always ungrateful!"

"I am not Léonce," I answered him, embracing him in spite of himself; "and if I ever resemble him, I permit you to despise me."

As for Impéria, she seemed to me much more occupied with a new rôle she was studying than with my departure; and I was so grievously wounded thereat, that I resolved to go away without bidding her adieu. She was at the theatre with Anna, rehearsing a scene with unwearied persistency; but just as I was entering the diligence, I saw her hastening up, all out of breath, with her companion. They brought me a pretty keepsake that they had embroidered for me in the side-scenes, during the rehearsals, and Impéria bade me adieu with a tearful smile that restored me, body and soul, to her allegiance.

My father was overjoyed to see me again, and hardly questioned me on the employment of my time. Seeing me studious, and apparently contented with my lot, he did not seek to comprehend why I had travelled all summer.

Nevertheless, I felt almost desperate, and, for the first time, I found my village, my home, my existence,

intolerable. I measured the abyss that divided me from the companions of my childhood, and the coarseness of my normal sphere wounded me like an injustice of destiny. On reflection, I quickly recognized that it was the fault neither of this station, if I could accept it no longer, nor of myself, if it had ceased to satisfy me. The whole trouble proceeded from my father's simple ambition to raise me above his own condition. To leave it in reality, I needed not only years of constant study and unflinching courage, and I felt myself capable of it; but a certain superiority of intellect, and my mediocre theatrical essay, had given me a great self-distrust. You will say that this was unreasonable; that the stage being a very evident specialty, my awkwardness and timidity should not discourage me from the bar, which is quite another specialty. I persuaded myself, I still imagine, that the two are only one, and that I should be a still worse orator than actor.

By torturing myself with this fear, I finished by rendering myself unable to conquer it, and I conceived a profound distaste for my law studies. I had no means to buy an advocate or notary's office, I was as willing to be gardener as head clerk for life. I would not think of the magistracy; we were then in a political current which was preparing the dictatorship. I had the opinions of my age, and all the ardor of a student. I would resort neither to the protection of my uncle the deputy baron, nor to that of any of the bigwigs of my department; to obtain their sup-

port I should have had to bind myself to assist a reaction which my hot head did not relish, and whose continuance the youth of that time did not credit.

We are not here to discuss politics. I do not know your opinions, and I will not unfold my own to you; but I must tell you that my character remains uncivilized in moral independence, and that, in this respect, I did not err in entering on the life of an artist; only, this ambition for liberty should have been made lawful by genuine talent, and I had, perhaps, no talent at all! What should I do? It was so much the worse for me!

Ennui preyed upon me; for of all causes of *ennui*, irresolution is the most wearing. I was agonized to find no object for my life, and to know no longer how to employ my energy, my intellect, my facility in learning, my memory, the forces of my nature, my heart, and my brain. I had fancied that I was somebody, that I might become something, and suddenly I found in myself only impotence and discouragement around me, only obstacles or precipices. Léon's malady gained upon me, and I felt the horror of it.

There are thousands of young men in this position; for the man of the people, when he has risen somewhat above want, aspires to push his children higher than himself. Well-born youth, whose position is already achieved, know not what we suffer at that triumphant age when we have done with the hated slavery of college, to gain a liberty which leads only to unhappiness, unless by su-

preme effort or some unlikely chance. He who succeeds among us merely does his duty in the eyes of the parents who have sacrificed themselves for him; he who fails, for lack of intelligence or energy, is harshly condemned. They do too much and too little for us. It would be better to give less and exact less.

My father was not a man to condemn me thus; but I knew what he would suffer in seeing me fail, and I asked myself if it was not my duty to dissuade him from his chimera of raising me above my class, before his hopes became more deeply rooted. There was still time to tell him that I did not possess the talent which he had gratuitously attributed to me; that I had attempted to speak in public, and had spoken badly; lastly, that I preferred to assist him in his work, and learn his calling under his direction. Certainly, I should have done so at this period; but on the one hand love restrained me, and with it the desire of following my idol's footsteps; on the other, manual labor, to which I had not been accustomed, filled me with horror, and I could not overcome the disgust which seized me, at the thought of that stupefaction in which I must drown my mind. I felt an inclination to do nothing with my will, rather than enslave it thus. I was very wrong, monsieur, I was utterly mistaken; the acceptance of idleness is the most fatal thought that can enter a human head. I did not dream how much strength the mind preserves, when it is resolved to defend itself; but you see I was too young to know that.

In the midst of this secret anguish I received — the same day, it is to be observed — two letters, which I carried with all speed to my own room, and which I will read you. The first is from Impéria: —

THE HAGUE, October 1, 1850.

MY DEAR COMRADE: You promised to write us, and we begin to be uneasy at your silence. M. Bellamare charges me to tell you so, and I join my own reproaches to his. Have you so soon forgotten your companions, your friends, your fatherly director, and your little sister Impéria, who could not come to that conclusion without regret? No, it is impossible. Either you are too happy in your family to steal an hour from them and devote it to us, or you have some sad preoccupation of which you do not wish to tell us until afterward: perhaps a sick relative, perhaps your father, whom you love so much, and of whom you have spoken so fondly to us. Take at least one minute to reassure us all; and, if it is pleasure, vacation, hunting, excursions, country, and family amusements that engross you, we shall be content to know it, and will not demand a long letter.

For fear of reaching you at a moment when you will not feel much interest in it, my own must give you certain details about us all. I will begin with myself, for you will be surprised to see by the postmark that I am not at Paris.

It is because this year I suddenly took a great resolution. The Odéon had accepted the conditions of my re-engagement, and a few days after

you bade adieu to Limoges, M. Bellamare received the said engagement, signed by M. Bocage, and awaiting only my own signature. I had considered ; I felt that in increasing my small salary, they would demand more progress of me than I had made. Then I remembered how expensive and gloomy it was to live in Paris, when one is alone in the world. I was heart-broken at the idea of leaving, for three fourths of the year, the troupe which has become my family, and with which I am so happy, to go and shut myself up in my little dark, damp room at Paris, where my health suffered so much last winter, and where a longer illness would reduce me to receiving the charity of my companions or that of my *concierge*, or dying like a bird fallen from its nest. In short, Paris has made me fear for the present and for the future. If I must have talent, it is not there that I can acquire it, not having the means to pay a good professor, and not wishing to owe my success to his charity. I am distrustful, you know, where I am not acquainted, and I take refuge under the wings where I know how to be at peace. So I entreated M. Bellamare to retain me as pupil and *pensionnaire* ; and after having used all his generous eloquence to persuade me that I was acting contrary to my own interests, he was very willing to yield. So you will not see me again at Paris this winter, or perhaps next winter, for I do not feel that ambition to seek my fortune and attract attention there that they attributed to me. I feel better suited in these provincial towns, where they do not

demand so much, and where we do not remain long enough for them to lose their fancy for us. I feel myself a true Bohemian, as I have told you. It is as much a matter of modesty and reason as of taste.

You are enlightened on my account. I pass to the other members of our *roman comique*. Anna is still with us, and still charming as an artist, excellent as friend and *pensionnaire*, although Moranbois still shows himself pitiless toward her megrims. The Moranbois has not softened the coloring of his language, but he has ceased to think me mercenary and selfish, and is at heart the best of men. Léon has finished a drama which is very fine in reading, but is as *unplayable* as the others. I believe, however, that we could risk it here. The impassible Dutch, who listen to us religiously, without appearing to comprehend a word we say, would accept the greatest eccentricities as well as the other novelties of our repertory. All would pass with them like water through a sieve ; I believe that the hiss is an instrument of which they have never heard. It is true that they are equally ignorant of the custom of applauding ; and if we had not before our eyes all these great faces shining with health, we might fancy we were acting in a desert. There are moments, I assure you, when their immobility, the fixedness of their enamelled eyes, the absolute indifference of their faces, all of the same color, produce the effect of an assembly of wax figures all cast in the same mould, with which an empty hall had been furnished to simulate an audience. It

is something inexpressible which freezes and stops one's breath ; so I am worse here than I have ever been before.

Lambesq is replaced by Mercœur, a "general-utility man," who plays Frederick Lemaitre, not very successfully ; but he is a worthy man, who has a wife and children, who works like a horse, and roars like a hoarse lion. Little Marco improves every day. He is the most successful of us with the public, who always love the comedian. But he is a worthy lad, who loves you and regrets you.

Lucinde is in winter quarters with her wine-merchant, who has become a widower, and whom she expects to marry. No matter. In her place we have Camille, who has been beautiful, and who still has talent. Purpurino has but little to do, since Marco plays his rôles. He is growing thin with jealousy ; to console him Bellamare promises to make him speak the part of Thérámene, at the next benefit. That is all, I believe. I finish by pressing your hands, and I do not allude to the possibility of your return to the *wandering fold*. Our manager will write you about it at his earliest leisure.

For me, and for your other faithful and devoted comrades,

IMPÉRIA.

At first I felt restored to life on reading these little fly-tracks ; I kissed them a thousand times, I bedewed them with my tears, I interpreted to my liking their gayety, their unconcern, their gentle kindness. It needed but for me to read

the other letter to comprehend the emptiness and coldness of the first ; hear it : —

M. B—— has written to me at last. You say no. It is really no ; it will be no for me also. Without pique, without shame, without despair, I accept the sentence of your sincerity, and I appreciate so much the more your character. Perhaps I should have had some fear of myself, if you had said yes ; but now I am reassured, and very proud of my choice, for you will remain, whether you will or no, the one whom I have chosen, whom I have desired, whom I respect, and whom I love. You will never hear of me again, and you will never have the sorrow of learning that my love has caused my death. On the contrary, I shall survive it. It will be the event, the serious romance, the good and beautiful souvenir, of my woman's life. I know not what this life will be, as regards the world that surrounds me ; but I know that at the bottom of my reanimated soul there will never again be dismay nor weariness. There will be a certainty there, a thought, a faith, a tenderness, a gratitude ; there will be *you*, to-day and always.

THE UNKNOWN OF BLOIS

Permit me not to show you her handwriting ; but I can assure you that it is clear, firm, elegant, and rapid. It is legible as an infant's soul, as a mother's heart. It awoke palpitations in me, as if I felt this generous and faithful hand placed on my head. and as if the mysterious

voice that I had heard from the blue room said in my ear, "Madman that thou art, how canst thou hesitate and doubt?"

I read over the letter from Impéria; it told me very clearly that in the dislike and dread of life at Paris the idea of meeting me there had not weighed a hair's weight. Either from modesty or truthfulness, it spoke of friendship for me, only as the spokesman of a collectivity; but the heart, which might have slipped, adroitly or instinctively, its personal note into the concert, had neither unveiled nor betrayed itself. The desire to recall me to the wandering fold had not manifested itself. I had fought for her, and I had never spoken of love to her; she was grateful. She esteemed me enough to write to me; but all the company might have seen her letter, and all the world might comment on it. What she said of her tenderness for her Bohemian companions was intended for them, and not for me.

Moranbois was right. She would never love any one; cold and prudent as her talent, she needed a strolling life, to thaw a little, and not to grow weary of her own reason. It was not the art that she loved; it was the movement and distraction, necessary to her fearful and reserved temperament.

What whim, what monomania, had then inclined me toward her? Why had I scorned this stranger, who did not fear to reveal herself to the very depths of her soul? I had the entire heart, I possessed the intoxicating secret of an invisible woman, whose name I did not know; the veritable

unknown was the companion who *thou'd* me in the animation of our daily studies, and who, to conceal the frightful emptiness of her heart, had invented a mysterious love that she did not feel.

Without hesitating or reflecting, and entirely on my first impulse, I took two sheets of paper, and wrote on one, "Success to you!" on the other, "I adore you!" I put the name of Impéria on the first; I wrote on the second, "To the unknown": and I put the two sealed letters in one envelope, addressed to Bellamare; but at the moment of closing the latter, I grew cowardly, I withdrew the three words destined for Impéria. I persuaded myself that I was too proud to testify pique to her. I effected a compromise, and feigning not to have received her letter yet, I wrote to Bellamare:—

"You forget me. I learn by accident where you are. I wish to tell you that I love you still as a father, and beg you to remember me kindly to my comrades. Will you have the goodness to transmit to the unknown—whom you know—the brief letter here enclosed?"

And the letter departed. I overcame the fright which my audacity caused me. My hand trembled on throwing into the letter-box these three words to the Countess, which perhaps enchained my conscience and my life forever. I felt it, I persisted in it. It was sweet to me to break with Impéria. I relished a sort of vengeance that I dared not tell her, which would have injured her in no way, which would have

made her laugh if she had known it, and which might recoil cruelly on me alone, but which flattered my pride, and set me free, as I thought, from a year of constraint and torture.

Thus matters stood for several days; then I thought that I must, nevertheless, reply to Impéria. I succeeded in writing her a long letter of the most absurd and gayest character. I took much pains with it, and I verily believe that subdued anger gave me wit. I meted out to her exactly the dose of attachment that she had so skilfully measured to me, and testified no desire to rejoin her. Once more I burned my ships, and fancied that I burned them for the last time.

This incident rekindled my desire to study. If the Countess accepted my change, and understood this spontaneous outburst of my heart, I must employ the time that kept me far from her in rendering myself worthy of her. It was not necessary, on that account, that I should be received as advocate, or make a trial of a doubtful talent; but I ought to study law, not to be incompetent for the struggles of practical life, and I ought, at the same time, to develop and improve my intellect, in every sense, as much as possible. So I returned to the task with a sort of fury. I procured all the serious books that they could lend me in the country. I began to learn, by myself, the languages, music, drawing, natural history, promising myself to pass the following year in Paris, and to take as many lessons there as my portion would pay for and the days would admit of.

My father, who was so proud to see me read and write occasionally, was amazed to see me read and write day and night. He had no idea of anything like fatigue of the brain.

I awaited with anxiety the effect of my declaration to the Countess. I was disappointed at receiving no reply. The vacation ended. I departed for Paris, without any settled purpose; but having acquired a taste for study, and led on by self-love, wishing to repair my failure on the stage by gaining some sort of value, I kept my resolution. I separated myself from my former gay companions; I shut myself up with my books, and went out, only to attend court or special recitations. I had been there a month, when I received from *her* these few words:—

“I have been travelling. I find your note. How it troubles me! What does it mean? Explain yourself. Why was that no? Why is this yes?”

“Reply to me under the name of Mademoiselle Agathe Bouret, *poste restante*, at Paris. In two days I shall receive your letter.”

I replied:—

“I love you without having seen you. I have loved you in spite of all that separates us. I will be as sincere as you. When I heard you at Blois, I was bewitched. Your letter chased away the empty phantom; it took me as the tide takes the shipwrecked man, and does with him what it will. I was mad when I dared to tell you so. I am so still, to dare to repeat it. I lower myself,

I humble myself, in your eyes, by confessing to you that I am only a waif, perhaps I destroy myself; but I will conceal nothing from you. You have named, you have guessed, her whom I loved. She knows it not, she has not divined it herself! She will never know it; and now you will see in me only what I am, a child! Yes, but a child who will become a man, and who studies with ardor, to know, to understand, to be. Do not tell me again that I must give you my obscure name, and receive your fortune, which humiliates and disheartens me. Tell me that you will love me again, that you will write me, that you will permit me to love you. Love, love, let us speak only of love! I comprehend and feel nothing else; the rest is a dream!"

Eight days later she wrote me:—

"Impéria is adorably gracious, refined, pretty. I know who she is; she is of a better family than I. She is destined to regain by her talent the brilliancy of her former lot, tarnished by no fault of hers. You loved her; that was a matter of course. She did not guess it; proof that she is pure, and that you respect her profoundly. Not to dare to tell her! That is the greatest love that one can feel! Do you wish me to *tell her* myself? At present it would be all my happiness, all my pride, to make her life secure by uniting her to a man worthy of her. It is impossible that you do not love her. Do not struggle with yourself; you might lose thereby that sincerity of heart which now constitutes the

nobility and charm of your good and beautiful nature. Stay thus; it is thus that I will love you, as a sister loves her brother, as a mother loves her child, since you are still a child. One word, and I hasten to the Hague; I explain all to Bellamare, and we work together skilfully, delicately, resolutely, for you. I bring you Impéria; I marry her to you, and then I reveal myself."

This letter crushed me. I realized that I was ruined. My unknown was the bravest, the most generous of women, but she was a woman. I had been wrong in my frankness; she returned me to Impéria; what I had nearly written to the latter she wrote to me without remorse, "Success to you!" that is to say, "Love whom you please." Proud and lofty in her romance, she preferred to play a grand rôle, and deigned not to descend to the contest. She would not aid me in struggling against a possible relapse, or give herself the trouble of curing some half-stifled regret. She had had the energy to offer herself; she had not the energy to conquer.

On recalling all that I had heard in the blue room, I recognized that her whole course expressed and contained this mingling of courage and prudence. She had wished to know if my heart was entirely free, if she could take possession of it without danger; she would not talk of me before assuring herself of this essential point. Without doubt, Bellamare had satisfied her in this respect; and at that time she attributed my refusal only to the modest pride of a

poor devil, alarmed by a rôle above his abilities. That was why she had written me this adorable letter that had overcome me, me! and which left her soaring above me in the serene might of her magnanimous attachment. I should have understood her; I should have been silent, and allowed the sincere and delicate confidant of our love to act in my stead. I had not dared to trust my secrets to him, this excellent Bellamare. He was too near Impéria. He might suffer her to guess that I loved her, — or that I loved her no longer.

How ought I to have answered the Countess? I do not know, but I could answer her nothing. I tried in vain. Each burst of love, each protestation of sincerity that I strove to express, plunged me deeper into the slough of humiliation. I no longer found in myself the strength to convince her; her confidence had deprived me of mine. She treated me like an irresolute child, almost like a lying child. I asked myself if she was not right, if she did not read my feelings more correctly than I did. How could I write or speak, when I knew that each word would give a handle to a suspicion well grounded and systematically reasoned out? It seemed to me that I was face to face with her, as I had been with the public, when at each frozen word of my utterance I fancied I heard each spectator answer me, "Bad actor, you feel nothing of what you express!"

I did not reply; that is to say that I wrote twenty letters, thirty perhaps; and burned them all. And every time that I burned one I was glad and

said to myself, "Do not begin a contest in which you will be worsted. Even though this woman should love you enough to free you from the fear of a disproportioned marriage, and to give herself to you, she will recover herself at a given time; she is the stronger, because she is the calmer, because her rôle governs yours and crushes it. You will love her passionately, madly, with the violence of youth, and the faults of inexperience; always generous, her resolution taken, she will crush you with her sweetness, her forgetfulness, her disdain, perhaps! No, a hundred times no; tear her from your imagination; and if her charms have found their way into your heart, grind your heart to powder, rather than dishonor it."

I kept my resolution; I did not write again. I plunged desperately into work once more. I abstained from all pleasure, I forbade myself the theatre; I was seen no more upon the benches nor in the side-scenes at the Odéon. I acquired not much knowledge, but many ideas, and I perceived, with a pleasure mingled with alarm, that I had a gift for everything, that is, perhaps a gift for nothing. Thus the winter glided by. I thought no longer of Impéria; I believed myself cured of my fancy for her. As spring approached, I felt a trouble in my weary head, dizziness, and loss of appetite. I refused to pay attention to it. In the month of April, these slight symptoms recurring, I took a long walk in the sun, about the environs of Paris, fancying that I should refresh my blood by violent exercise. I went to bed on my return; I had a brain-fever.

Between sleep and delirium, I know not what happened to me. One morning, I became conscious of a great languor. I recognized my chamber. I believed I was alone, and I went to sleep again, conscious of wishing to sleep. I was out of danger.

I awoke; clear images replaced the formless, nameless phantoms that had swept me along with them in the chaos of delirium. I beheld *Impéria* again. She was in a garden full of flowers, and I called her for rehearsal, which was held in another garden, beside it. I raised myself, and called her, with a feeble voice. I was still dreaming while awake.

"What do you wish, my dear friend?" replied a sweet and very real voice. And the beloved head of my dear comrade appeared to me, bending over mine.

I closed my eyes again, thinking it was still a dream; I reopened them, feeling her little hand on my forehead, from which she wiped away the perspiration. It was she; it was truly she; I was no longer feverish nor wandering. She had been there for three days. She cared for me as if I had been her brother. *Bellamare* and *Moranbois*, who had come to Paris to make their annual engagements, relieved her, alternately, with me. She rested, then, in the next room; she did not leave me. She explained all this to me, to prevent me from astonishment or questions.

"You are safe," she said. "You need much rest; you have nothing better to do; we are here; we will not leave you until you can walk.

Do not thank us; it is a duty for us to assist you, and a pleasure, now that we are no longer anxious."

For the first time she began freely to call me "thou," either through a feeling of maternal interest, or because she had entirely adopted the habits of the strolling theatre, little ceremonious at that time. I covered her hands with kisses; I wept like a child; I adored her; I thought no longer.

She helped me to take a little lemonade, which she had herself prepared for me. They had scarified my shoulders with cupping-glasses, and she had inspected and dressed them, as a sister of charity might have done. I am not sure that, during my unconsciousness, she had not condescended to the humblest functions of sick-nurse. This girl, so pure and so reserved, felt neither shame nor disgust beside the bed of illness. She tended me as she had probably tended her father.

This boundless charity is a virtue which it is impossible to deny to actors. *Impéria* had acquired it in this station where she was not born, and she exercised it with all the sweetness of her attentive, considerate, and delicate nature. The kind-hearted *Régine*, who had returned to the *Odéon*, came to nurse me also, but with too much noise and zeal. I felt really better only when *Impéria* was near me. *Anna* paid me a brief, though very affectionate visit, but she had a jealous lover, who would not permit her to come again.

One evening *Moranbois* said to *Impéria*: "Princess," — he always addressed her so, with a half-respect-

ful, half-derisive tone, — “you are pale and yellow, not to say green. You are worn out. I wish you to go home, go to bed, and sleep a whole night. I will take charge of your patient, and will be answerable for him. Go! Moranbois has said it; Moranbois desires it!”

I joined my entreaties to his. She was obliged to yield; but while she was preparing my medicines, and explaining carefully their use to Moranbois, I cried like a baby who has promised his mamma to behave very well, but who cannot see her depart without sorrow and dismay. Fortunately I hid my head between the sheets, and no one saw my poor weak tears.

This was my first feint. Afterwards, when reflection returned to me, I continued the deception. In the room they often talked of me in a low voice, and the torpor of convalescence rendered me indifferent to what they might be saying. Gradually, on regaining my consciousness more fully, I bethought myself to listen, and if possible surprise some revelation of Impéria's true sentiments in regard to me. So, from time to time, I simulated a profound sleep that no noise could disturb, and I was careful not to lose a word, while giving to my features the immobility of utter deafness. This time I acted my part very well.

The only interesting dialogue that I overheard was this one, between Impéria and Bellamare. It was decisive, as you will see.

“He always sleeps as well as this?”

“Always.”

“And you, — you are not tired?”

“Not at all.”

“Do you know that he is still handsomer, with that pallor and that black beard?”

“Yes, he reminds me of Delacroix's Hamlet.”

“Come now, my child, what surprises me is, that you are not enamored, all in good faith, with this handsome and worthy boy.”

“But I assure you, I do not love handsome boys.”

“Because they are fools. This one is intelligent.”

“Certainly, I love him *morally*, and with all my heart.”

“‘Morally!’ a delicate word in your mouth, Mademoiselle de Valclos!”

“Do not be mischievous, Monsieur Bellamare. I am twenty-three, and I see all that the stage unveils, more frankly than society. So I will not affect ignorance with you. I know that love is a fever which certain glances kindle; I know that ugly persons inspire passion, and that handsome ones can experience it, when they are not exclusively wrapped up in themselves. Yet notwithstanding all this, I have never felt the least agitation with Lawrence or with Léon, who is also very handsome, and in no wise vain. Why? It is impossible for me to say. I am inclined to fancy that my eyes are not artistic, and do not perceive the influence of a fine physique.”

“That is singular! Was he whom you preferred ugly?”

“He must be!”

“Ah! it is a long time since I have had an opportunity to talk se-

tionally with you, my dear pupil! Does this preference really exist?"

"You do not believe it?"

"I have never believed it."

"And you were very right," replied Impéria, stifling an odd little laugh.

"Why did you invent this romance?"

"So that they should leave me in peace."

"Then you distrust me also, since you did not confide the stratagem to me?"

"I have never distrusted you, my friend, never!"

"And you are resolved not to love?"

"Very resolved."

"You think it possible?"

"It has been possible so far."

"If Lawrence loved you, himself?"

"Do you believe that?"

"I believe it. He may have abandoned us from pique at your indifference!"

"I hope that you are mistaken! I am very much attached to him, but I am not in love with him, my friend, and it is not my fault."

"I have told you, without revealing anything to you, that he was loved by a lady of rank."

"You have told me so; it did not inspire me with the wish to please him. I am not coquettish."

"You are perfect, I know, and I am not one of those who will tell you that a woman without love is a monster. I have seen so many amorous monsters of both sexes, and I dreamed in my youth so many stupid things that I thought sublime —"

"That at present you believe in nothing?"

"In nothing but virtue, for I have encountered it two or three times in my life, walking like a tranquil goddess over the foul streets of the infernal regions, and receiving not a stain upon its robe, which passed white and shining in the midst of impurity. You are one of these strange exceptions, before whom I bow down to the ground, Mademoiselle de Valclos! I find it so beautiful, that I shall carefully refrain from dissecting an ideal like yourself! I think men senseless to demand purity from women in order to love them seriously, and to wish straightway to destroy this purity for their own profit. They have only scorn for the weak, anger at the strong. What would they have, then? For my part, I am all indulgence and pardon for the first, all respect and adoration for the second. Upon this, dear child, I will despatch my dinner. What do you wish me to send you for yours?"

"Tell the *restaurateur* to send me what he likes."

"He will send you veal!"

"Very well!"

"Veal! it is ignoble; it is not nourishing; a mutton-chop, eh?"

"As you choose, my dear friend; I am not an epicure."

"Sensual in no fashion, it is well known."

"Stay, however; I adore potatoes."

"They shall send you potatoes."

"And first of all, some good broth for my patient; but say, then, manager of my heart, have you money?"

"Not a sou to-day, my little one; but that makes no difference; the

innkeeper knows me, and to-morrow I receive some."

"But this evening you are going to the Vaudeville?"

"Ah well! Have I not my admission?"

"It is wretched weather; take something to pay for an omnibus."

"You have money then?"

"I have twelve sous."

"The deuse!"

"Take them, come!"

"Sooner death!" cried he, with a tragic-comic air, that made Impéria laugh, after he had gone out.

This mixture of delicate and trivial things which I relate to you, this sudden transition from elevated thoughts to the vulgar realities of every-day life, this exquisite, profound, and sincere respect which Bellamare had for Mademoiselle de Valclos, returning abruptly to the paternal familiarity with the little actress of his troupe, paint for you, I think, in their true colors, the height and depth of the minds of intelligent actors. I was more struck by it to-day than I had ever been before; I had just heard the irrevocable truth in all its candor, and, what will perhaps surprise you, I was not grievously afflicted by it. A convalescent has not keen impressions; one would say that he has but one object, which is to live, no matter at what price; and then I had sincerely renounced Impéria, in offering my heart to the Countess. I should have scorned myself if the slightest irresolution had justified the injurious suspicions of my unknown. Even after the tacit rupture which these suspicions had brought about

between us, I should have hesitated in returning to my first love. So I assured myself that I would henceforth be to Impéria what she wished me to be, her brother and her friend. To the sentiment with which she inspired me I gave the names of tenderness and gratitude. At twenty, one accepts these impossible compromises boldly and in good faith. We think ourselves so strong! we have so naïve a pride!

When I could leave my bed, Impéria quitted me; the next day, which I passed in an arm-chair, beside a very moderate fire, she returned, and, without removing her hat and cloak, kept me company during the afternoon. I was strong enough to talk without fatigue, and I greatly desired to know the pecuniary situation of Bellamare. What I had heard made me think with reason that it was not brilliant. I asked if he had been successful in Belgium and Holland.

"No," said Impéria, "quite the contrary. Our tour with you was profitable enough; but as soon as Bellamare has any profits in his hands, the love of improvement takes possession of him. You know that he always dreams of advancing art, while making a living; and then he is so generous! So he hastened to increase all our salaries, and to engage Mercœur, who is inferior to Lambesq, but is better paid, because he is the father of a family. The same with Camille, who is not equal to Lucinde, but supports herself only by the stage. The receipts diminished; living is expensive in the North. It was in vain that Anna,

Léon, and I restored to Moranbois's treasury, unknown to Bellamare, the surplus of the salary that he had forced us to accept. The season finished, he came out honorably, as he always does in his engagements ; but we arrived here with nothing ; and if I had not had a tolerably good quantity of my lace to sell, still without the knowledge of Bellamare, I know not how we should have lived. Now we are sure of paying for our food and lodgings. Léon has been at Blois, on a visit to his friend, whom I believe you know, and who has lent him a sum that Bellamare accepts. He always accepts, because he always finds means to repay, and when he has repaid, he begins to have nothing again ; it has been so for so long, that his serenity is never affected by it, and we have grown accustomed to share his confidence."

I resolved that I, too, would put one of my thousand franc-notes into the treasury, and I began to consider. Bellamare had great schemes for the summer: he wished to leave France, where we had too many competitors, and he said that French being the universal language, if good actors starved at home, it was because they lacked the courage to travel. That evening it was Moranbois who kept me company. I wished to hand him my offering: he refused it. They could run in debt a little with Léon, he said, because he would eventually inherit a rich patrimony, and was a beggar only because he chose to be so ; but they knew very well that I was not in a situation to sustain Bellamare's enterprise with my money. Bellamare

was always satisfied when he made both ends meet, at the end of the year, and, according to Moranbois, Bellamare was right.

"Because," said he, "if a man makes an honest living, what does it matter if he lays up nothing ? The wisest and the best are those who succeed in just escaping poverty. They have not the trouble of possessing, preserving, investing, and increasing. The responsibility toward others is enough to satisfy an honest man, without the need of adding that stupid responsibility toward himself, which they call the faculty of management, which prematurely ruins people in the prime of life. It is anxiety in directing their money matters," said Moranbois, in his figurative language, that expands their stomachs and decays their teeth. The master" — so he styled Bellamare — "will always be young, because he will be niggardly neither to himself nor to others. He will not waste his freshness in building a palace to hold the dried apple that he will be twenty-five or thirty years hence. I hear everybody speak of providing for their old age, as if they were sure of having an old age, and as if they ought to desire one ! The pretty calculation of devouring their blood so long as they have it, in order to have something to nourish them, when they will be nothing but rubbish fit for the rag-picker's basket ! They say to the improvident, 'You will then ask alms when you can work no longer ?' As for me, I answer that the peasants till the ground till the day when they are buried in it, and that they are buried just so surely, whether

they have a fine linen sheet or an old cloth for a shroud."

In spite of my agreeing to this high philosophy, I insisted that I should be permitted to furnish Bellamare and his friends with the means of agreeably occupying and improving their youth as artists.

"We have a thousand francs from Léon," replied Moranbois. "It is enough to set us afloat again. I could get the master in debt, without his knowing it, but it would not be rendering him a service. If you wish to be useful to him, come and travel with us as a member of our association."

He then explained to me that Bellamare, Léon, Impéria, Anna, Marco, and himself had resolved to share in common the proceeds of their performances, and that, after having deducted the payment of the *pensionnaires* and the common expenses, they would divide the entire profits in equal parts among themselves.

"As for the profits," he added, "there will be none, but we shall have lived, worked, eaten, travelled, for a year, without being a burden to any one. See if you wish to be of the party. You need to shake up your sauce-pan, and extinguish your furnace, so the physicians say. You will not travel alone, that costs too much, and is too gloomy; with us you will enjoy yourself, and the expenses will be paid by the receipts."

"I would accept gladly," I answered, "if I had enough talent to contribute effectively to the receipts; but as I have not, I should be only one expense the more."

"You are mistaken; talent or not,

you draw the women, and fill our front seats for us. Léon, in the tender rôles, is worse than you, and they like him only in the drama. We have not replaced you, for lack of the wherewithal to engage a lover; you were very useful to us; we perceived it after your departure; our audiences fell off."

I confessed to Moranbois that this exhibition of my person humiliated me greatly. To justify a man in posing as a model before the public, he should know how to speak to their understanding as well as to their eyes. Moranbois, with all his penetration and intelligence, could not understand my scruple, and laughed at me for it. He thought that, when one is handsome and well made, there is no lack of modesty in displaying himself. I saw the former mountebank reviving in him, the cross-roads Hercules, exhibiting with satisfaction the muscle of his neck and shoulders.

I consulted Impéria in regard to Moranbois's proposition; her first impulse was to welcome the thought with a sincere and amiable joy; then I saw her grow uneasy and irresolute. I guessed that, warned by the supposition of Bellamare, she feared to encourage my love. I reassured her by telling her that I was betrothed to some one in my own province, but that I was too young to think of marriage, and that I was free to go about the world as I fancied, at least for a season. I thought that I could tell her a falsehood, as she had done with me; and as she had pretended an affection to preserve herself from my hopes, I assumed one to preserve myself from her fears.

Then she insisted strongly on taking me away with them, and the physician who had attended me seconded her. If I recommenced my studies before six months, it was all over with me. I wrote this to my father, who signified his approval by the hand of the village schoolmaster, his secretary. Moranbois and Bellamare welcomed me with delight. Bellamare drew up a handsomely written page, which set forth the rules of our association, and we desired that a clause should be added, by means of which he should preserve his absolute authority as manager over his *pensionnaires*. We were unwilling that any one among us, in some day of nervous excitement or misanthropic weariness, should impede by idle discussions the exercise of a direction as active and intelligent as his.

Anna courageously left her lover, who abused her, and whom she mourned for just the same. This girl, always unreasonable and unhappy in love, was the most estimable and faithful of women in friendship. She had neither spite nor bitterness, and she was even grateful to me for not having taken advantage of some emotion which she had experienced for me, in the earlier days of our wanderings. So she rejoiced to see me associated with the new enterprise. Léon, who returned from Blois, and Marco, who came back from Rouen, accorded me the same welcome, and maintained that I was an artist. We departed for Italy the last of August, without waiting for the closing of the Odéon, and without taking Régine, who was to

rejoin us as soon as she was free. We had to engage a fashionable coquette, and some kind of a Frederick Lemaitre, on the way. This was Lambesq, whom we chanced upon again, at Lyons. He had been unsuccessful, and was more tractable than formerly. However annoying he might be, we had owed a considerable portion of our success to him, and we were glad to get him back. Impéria voted for him, saying that we were used to his faults, and we should not easily replace his good qualities.

We were about to make arrangements with a Mademoiselle Arsène, who had played the confidantes at the Théâtre Français, and who believed herself qualified thereby to take the parts of Rachel in the province. We were not as sure of it as she, and were still hesitating, when Lucinde wrote us that she had always wished to visit Italy, and that she would be satisfied with the salary that she had formerly received among us. She had not succeeded in obtaining a promise of marriage from her wine-merchant, who still supplied her with a certain luxury, but who wearied her. She hoped, perhaps, to revive his passion by leaving him alone, and feigning to prefer the stage to him. We waited for her, and crossed the frontier with her. The troupe was quite complete; and, the business arrangements settled, they were glad to meet again. On the route we performed more than one play which required more rôles than we had in the company. At this period, when France was in a state of great disturbance, many

actors, thrown out of employment, sought their fortunes abroad, and we could enlist some of them for a time. These Bohemian actors were occasionally very curious specimens, especially those who, in the midst of the strangest vicissitudes, had continued honest. If I do not speak of those whom poverty had corrupted, or who, in their idleness and vice, had been necessarily and fatally overtaken by it, it is because among those types there is such a sameness, that there is no interest in observing and describing them. Those who, on the contrary, would sooner starve than dishonor themselves, deserve biographies composed by people of ability. It is the peculiar and respectable band of the brotherhood that the practical world do not pity nor assist, because their misfortunes justly prove their lack of common sense, and may be ascribed without mercy to their improvidence and disinterestedness. I confess that I have more than once experienced a very lively sympathy for those honest adventurers, and that, if I had not regarded my little capital as religiously devoted to the accidents which threatened my own comrades, I should have expended it in ready money for the assistance of these chance companions. I will specify one instance out of a hundred, to give you an idea of certain destinies.

His name was Fontanet, — De Fontanet; for he was a gentleman, and neither displayed nor concealed his prefix. He had enjoyed a capital of five hundred thousand francs, and during his simple and serious youth he had lived in the country, on his

own estate, addicted to the collection of works which treated of the theatre. Why this mania rather than another? In point of whims, it is useless to be astonished at anything. Could one ascend to the mysterious source whence flow the innumerable fancies of the human brain, chance would be found the necessary consequence of inclination.

So it was that Fontanet found himself ruined, one fine morning of 1849, by a friend engaged in business, whom he had allowed to place a mortgage of fifty thousand francs upon his property. It was, at that time, a frequent speculation to borrow a slight sum on some valuable estate, not to repay it, to effect by underhand means the sale of the estate, and to repurchase it, still secretly, at a low price. So in this manner stocks frequently fell, to enrich prudent and wary capitalists.

A victim to this amiable operation, Fontanet found it useless to complain; and, fancying that his archæological knowledge of the theatre qualified him to go upon the stage, he became an actor. Nature had denied him everything save intellect; he had neither voice, physique, delivery, ease, memory, nor presence of mind. He met with no success, which did not prevent him from finding his new profession very amusing, and continuing to collect for others the books and engravings which he could no longer buy for himself. Having obtained a subordinate situation in the theatre at Lyons, and seeking a lodging, he found for a very low price a sort of shop, which by reason of its small size could never be

let to any merchant. He installed his pallet there; but the next day he said to himself, that, having a shop, he ought to sell something, and he bought for twenty francs a stock of children's toys,—tops, balls, skipping-ropes, and hoops. At the same time he busied himself in constructing little wooden shovels and wheelbarrows. His business was very good, and he might still have prospered, but the troupe to which he was attached left Lyons, and he could not make up his mind to quit the stage. He resigned his stock to a Jew who knew his weakness, and gave him in exchange an apocryphal portrait of an antique actor. It was a little bronze affair, cunningly adorned with a fictitious legend. Fontanet believed he had secured a treasure, and sought to sell it. He asked a thousand francs for it, and could not resolve to part with it, until the day that he discovered the fraud, and consoled himself for it by saying, "How fortunate that I did not sell it for a thousand francs! How I should have cheated the purchaser!"

In a town of Piedmont he encountered a pious lady, who begged him to direct her to a *good painter*. She wished to ornament her private chapel with a picture, two yards in height by one in breadth, representing her patron saint, and she would pay the artist one hundred francs. Fontanet offered to paint the picture himself. He had never drawn a face nor touched a paint-brush in his life. He set about the work boldly, copied as well as he could some saint upon the first fresco he came across, and signed his name with pride: *De Fon-*

tanet, painter of religious subjects. He had other commissions, hung out a flaming sign, and began to make a living, when chance carried him to another place, where a passion for pottery seized upon him, and he made a number of Etruscan vases, which he sold to the English, but for so moderate a price that they were not cheated, and congratulated themselves on cheating the ignorant vendor.

What Fontanet had earned by his pictures he lent to the manager of a strolling company, who did not repay it; what he had earned by his vases he gave to a poor beggar; to educate a child whose figure had served him as a model, and whom he placed at school. So it was that, after having engaged in a hundred little professions and a hundred little trades, without having saved anything for himself, and still unable to resolve to leave the theatre, which of all his callings was the most ruinous, inasmuch as it allowed him to establish himself nowhere, and brought him into constant contact with adventurers or needy people who despoiled him, he offered himself to us at Florence, to play the *financiers*. He had ended by acquiring a certain talent since his *début*. He was useful to us; and he was so amiable, so gay, so original, and so sympathetic, that we regretted greatly when we were forced to leave him.

I will not relate to you my travels; it would take me three days, and my reminiscences, very good, perhaps, to fill up a desultory conversation, would retard what inter-

ests you,— the history of my feelings and my thoughts.

So I will make you pass swiftly by Turin, Florence, Trieste; I will bring you back through Austria and Switzerland, where we reckoned up our gains at Geneva, after some tolerably successful nights. We had, as Moranbois said, we had seventy-five francs clear profit to divide among seven partners; but we had had an interesting and almost comfortable journey, the *pensionnaires* were paid, and Léon's friend was reimbursed. Lucinde, Lambesq, and Régine left us. My vacation had come, and my father expected me. The other members of the company were going to try their fortune, they did not yet know where. I promised to rejoin them after the winter, which I intended to pass at Paris; and this time Moranbois accepted the loan of my thousand francs, necessary to enable my manager and my associates to reorganize themselves.

Back in my little country Faubourg, surrounded by the paternal radishes and asparagus, I had leisure to recapitulate, as I will try to do for you.

I had made some progress at the theatre. I had acquired an excellent manner, without appearing embarrassed, although I really felt so. I had gained sufficient self-possession not to give, through agitation, the misinterpretations which my intelligence rejected. I still pleased women, and did not displease men. I resigned myself to being always unparalleled like a man of taste. At first I had felt humiliated by this circumstance, saying that I would not owe

my success to the tailor. I saw that the public took more notice of my waistcoats than of my attainments, and held in high consideration a man so well gotten up. My companions, in a moment of facetiousness, had amused themselves by representing me as a young man of high rank, and they dispensed with my being a good actor because I appeared to be a man of the world.

"Do not laugh at that," said Bellamare to me; "you are our ensign; your nobility is productive, and at each new station the imagination of the loungers enriches the company with an additional hidalgo. At Venice I was *il Signor di Bellamare*, manager of a troupe of titled personages, and I had only to say the word to make you a duke and myself a marquis. The prestige of nobility still exists abroad. In France it mingles drolly with democratic vanity; and if you were enough of an adventurer to put a *de* before your name, the people in the small towns would be proud of having a grandee for an actor. So do not deny being one, and do not take all this seriously; we are travelling to amuse ourselves. Be certain that it detracts nothing from the talent that you should have, and that you shall have, I give you my word for it."

He strove to inspire me with it; he did impart it to me, when I repeated my parts to him. We have declaimed Corneille while crossing the Alps on donkeys. The glaciers of Switzerland, the shores of the Mediterranean, the ruins, the grottos, all the picturesque solitudes that we explored together, re-echoed the

sound of our voices, raised to the pitch of dramatic passion. I felt myself powerful, I thought myself inspired. Before the foot-lights, all disappeared. I was too conscientious; I judged myself too severely; I was my own critic and my own obstacle.

So much for my talent; as to my love, it had taken a new aspect. Mademoiselle de Valclos's calmness of mind and serenity of character, which were not disturbed for a single moment, amid the inevitable reverses, mishaps, fatigues, and accidents of travel, had insensibly awakened in me that calm and tender respect which they inspired in Bellamare, without exciting in him the slightest thought of passion. Bellamare was, notwithstanding, not profligate, but devoted to pleasure. He knew no medium between desire without affection, and affection without desire. This man, so happy in his disposition, and so seductive from the kindness of his heart, exercised a powerful influence over my mind. I wished to adopt his views and feelings. I strove to imitate him in his errors and his wisdom; but where he found calm, the clearing up of faculties after the *exfogation** of instincts, I felt only self-contempt and profound sadness. I was an idealist, and, besides, I was but half his age. It was absurd of me to fancy that one can arrange his life like that of another. Reason

does not fit us like a borrowed garment; each one should know how to adapt his own to his own individuality.

This infatuation for Bellamare, and this falcy of wishing to resemble him, succeeded at least in stifling my passion. Perhaps the rapid and violent passage of another love through my heart, the dream of the *unknown*, had somewhat effaced the image of Impéria. It is certain that I dreaded her no longer, and that a deep tenderness assuaged the secret violence of my desire. Seeing her so respected by my other associates, I should have thought myself a coxcomb to dream of vanquishing her. By dint of no longer dreaming of it, I no longer even desired it.

At least it was in this frame of mind that I left Geneva. After returning home, I thought of her without agitation; but soon it was impossible to conceal from myself that she was necessary to my intellectual life, and that away from her I was subject to profound *ennui*. I had not the courage to resume my serious studies. Music and drawing pleased me better, because they permitted me to think of her. She had a charming thread of a voice, was a good musician, and sang deliciously. While endeavoring to become a good musician myself, I thought only of singing with her or accompanying her. During our travels she had made me practise from time to time, and, in the main, her lessons were the best that I have received.

For some time I cherished the delusion that the society of Bellamare, Léon, Anna, and Marco was as es-

* I have retained this word in Lawrence's recital, because it struck me. I do not think it French, but I could wish that it was so. On the part of my narrator, it was, doubtless, a reminiscence of Italy, where the verb *sfogarsi*, admirably expressive, has no equivalent in our language. — *Author's Note.*

essential to me as that of Impéria. They loved me so much! They were so amiable and so interesting! How insupportable the lot to which I had returned appeared to me! In vain I reproached myself for this gulf between my former friends and me. I thought myself guilty, for regretting the conversation of Bellamare, when with my father; but was it not my poor father himself, who, by introducing me to civilization, had condemned me to break with barbarism?

Still, when I was candid with myself, I felt that I could have forgotten Bellamare and all my comrades, except Impéria. It was not my father's fault if I had conceived a foolish attachment for a person who was unwilling to love any one.

One day when I was crossing the Alps in a sledge with Bellamare, he had asked me the result of my affair with the Countess. I then told him the whole truth, or very nearly all. At that time I was fully persuaded that I had ceased to love Impéria, that I should never love her again, and that Bellamare could repeat my confidences to her without injuring me. I had, besides, considerably softened the ardor of my first passion in my revelations, and I had left its origin untold. I did not plume myself on having embraced a theatrical career on her account. I simply confessed that at the time of my adventure at Blois I had been more in love with her than with the unknown. All the rest I could relate frankly.

Bellamare's judgment on this situation struck me greatly. He approved of me at first, and then added, "Without knowing it, you have tak-

en the best course to be truly loved by this Countess; sincerity in the first place, followed by pride. When allowing you to see her suspicions, she expected a speedy reply, a contest in which she would declare herself vanquished, only after having rolled you, to her liking, over the dust of the arena. At that moment she had ceased to love you. That is the way with women. It is rendering them a service not to indulge them in their combative instincts, but to teach them to love sincerely, as they know so well how to love, when not misled by a quest for the impossible. Love is a fine, a sublime thing with them, at the *début*. Beware of the second and third acts of the drama! When one cannot hasten the *dénouement*, one must await it. Wait, then, in silence, cover the fire, and you will see her return, faithful and brave, as in the day of the blue room. If she does return, receive my congratulations. If she does not, rejoice at having escaped a love of the head. Those are the worst."

And Bellamare had added further, "If Impéria had not formed a resolution, I should have blessed your love. For my part, I think you worthy of each other; but she is discreet, and will not have a lover. Again she is reasonable, and will not rush into the misery of marriage. Lastly, she is happy in her virtue, and I believe in it, although I do not understand it. So, if you are reasonable yourself, do not think of it again. Do you fancy that the first day when she came to me, mysteriously, as the Countess, but with ideas otherwise

serious and decided, to tell me her family misfortunes, and to entreat me to give her a profession and support, that I was not agitated, as much as, and perhaps more than, you were in the blue chamber? She was so pretty in her sorrow, so seductive in her confidence. I was seized with dizziness ten times, in these two hours of *tête-à-tête* conversation; but if Bellamare has a nose to scent an opportunity, and a claw to seize it by the forelock, he has an eye to distinguish true virtue, and a hand which purifies itself in blessing it. On leaving her, I had promised to be her father, and to every afterthought I had said, "Never, never, never!" Now, when things present themselves so clearly to my conscience, I cease to have the slightest merit, because there is no longer the slightest struggle, and I confess that I cannot comprehend how it costs an honorable man more not to deceive a woman than not to cheat at cards."

At that moment Bellamare's argument seemed unanswerable; I reflected on it all through my vacation. I could find no reply to it; but it did not prevent me from being very dejected and unhappy. I tried to rekindle my affection for the Countess, and often I dreamed of the joy of mutual love; but on awaking I cared for her no more. Her image appealed to my heart only through imagination.

When the vacation was ended, I asked myself whether I should not renounce law, which conducted me to nothing, and rejoin Bellamare's company. I was unwilling to take this resolution without consulting

my father. I expected that he would dissuade me from it; he had no idea of it. At first I had some difficulty in making him understand what the theatre was; for a dramatic troupe had never come among us; we had no hall. What my father called *comedians* were the Swiss tea-dealers, exhibitors of menageries, and the mountebanks, whom he had seen at fairs and public gatherings. So I was very careful not to utter the words "comedy" or "comedian," which would only have inspired him with a profound scorn. Despite my resolution to be open, I gave him explanations which, although really true, conveyed to his mind only a vague and somewhat fantastic meaning. My father has always had the primitive simplicity of a man devoted to manual labor, as to a duty, a religion from which no idea foreign to this labor can distract him, without disqualifying him for it. My mother, who was very intelligent, had laughed at him a little for his credulity and his good-nature. He suffered her to do so, and was very willing to laugh with her; they adored each other, notwithstanding but he would not have permitted me to notice his inferiority to me. He wished me to be *different* from himself, but not *superior*; he esteemed his vocation as unlike mine, but equal to it. His adoration for the earth did not allow him to think otherwise, and he was really quite in the right of it, and entertained a high philosophy without suspecting it. He respected learning very humbly, but it was on condition of according equal respect to culture of the soil. If he had dis-

couraged me from it, it was because he imagined, by making me a peasant, he would unfit me for the fancied succession to my uncle, the *parvenu*.

When I had told him that I desired to join a company of persons, who spoke in public to exercise themselves in declaiming finely, he was satisfied, and asked no more about it. He had feared to show me by his questions how little he knew of the nature of this study. So I departed, carrying with me his blessing, as heretofore, and my little capital, which, since the preceding year, I had always borne about with me in an under-waistband. It was not heavy enough to trouble me, especially as I had already diminished it one half.

In the beginning of the winter, then, I rejoined the troupe at Toulon, and was received enthusiastically by them. The situation was not brilliant, but they were still "getting along," as Moranbois phrased it, and they held a council to decide if they should continue the exploration of the coasts.

At this period the towns along the sea-shore had hardly begun to enjoy the vogue which they have since acquired. There was, as yet, no question of railroads, gas, or gaming-houses. Europe had not yet laid siege to that narrow coast which stretches like an espalier in the sun, from Toulon to Monaco, and which will soon extend to Genoa.

"My children," Bellamare said to us, "we shall still 'get along,' if we do not make a great figure. I have never made money except outside of

France; no one is a prophet in his own country. I have made very nearly the tour of the world, and I know that the farther off one comes from, the more he attracts the curious. Do you remember that last year we succeeded better at Trieste, the extreme limit of our journey, than anywhere else? I wished to push on to Odessa, across the Danubian provinces. I recollected having been successful there; we should have returned by Moscow. You recoiled before the Russian campaign. If you trust me with it, we will undertake it; but as winter is approaching, we will begin with the warm countries. We will go to Constantinople, we will remain there two months; we will go from thence to Temesvar and Bucharest, which is also a good city; then as soon as the weather will permit we will cross the Balkan, reach Jassy, and arrive at Odessa with the swallows."

Some one remarked that the cost of the trip would be considerable. He showed us letters from a successful contractor, who would be responsible for our passage, and promised to take charge of our return, if we could not pay the expenses; it was a former partner, on whose honesty he believed he could rely. It was put to vote. Each one tossed up a coin, for "heads or tails." The majority of the throws decided the voyage. I confess that on seeing Impéria desire it, I cheated to make the balance incline to the affirmative side.

Once more I will make you take a stride over the tiresome or amusing details that would be irrelevant to my subject. I will only tell you,

that, if the majority were valiant and hopeful, the minority, represented by Lucinde, Lambesq, Régine, and Purpurin, were only partially or not at all so. This last did not pardon foreigners for not knowing French better than himself, and Lambesq, who pretended to speak Italian, was furious at being less misunderstood when he spoke his own language. His nature was embittered, like that of Léon, by disappointments, but he had not, like Léon, the good taste to conceal his wounds. He believed himself the only great genius in the world, and the only unappreciated one. According to him, the artists loved by the public and favored by fortune had owed their success only to intrigue.

Régine laughed at everything; no one was more inured to the miseries

of nomadic life; but she augured ill of our pecuniary success, and kept repeating that it was nothing to go away, the difficulty would be to return. Lucinde feared nothing on her own account. She was not a woman to embark with empty hands. But she feared lest we should be forced to pay the expenses of the return passage, and she did not conceal her anxiety.

Singularly enough, Moranbois, the most stoical and self-contained of all, was no longer without uneasiness; he did not know Zamorini, the contractor to whom Bellamare had intrusted himself, but he had, he said, had a bad dream about him; and this man of stone and iron, who feared no peril, and knew no hesitation, was superstitious, — he believed in dreams!

THE END.

HANDSOME LAWRENCE.

A SEQUEL TO "A ROLLING STONE."

BY

GEORGE SAND.

—

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

CARROLL OWEN

NEW YORK:
R. WORTHINGTON, 750 BROADWAY.
1879.

HANDSOME LAWRENCE.

I.

LAWRENCE had been speaking for two hours, and the sympathy with which he inspired me made me take a lively interest in his adventures; however, I bethought myself that he must be weary, and I carried him off to dine at my inn, where, having recruited his strength, he likewise resumed his story.

We left off (said he) at my departure for Italy, with Bellamare's company.

Before quitting Toulon I assisted at a closing entertainment, which seemed very strange to me. When the public were pleased with a troupe that had remained some time, they showed their gratitude, and bade them adieu, by throwing presents upon the stage. There was everything, from bouquets to tobacco. Each trade furnished a sample of its industry, — cloths, stockings, cotton caps, household utensils, provisions, shoes, hats, fruit, cutlery, I know not what more. The stage was covered with them, and some were caught in the air, by the musicians, who did not return them. I need not tell you that this patriarchal custom is almost obsolete at the present day.

All went well at the beginning of our journey.

Bellamare, sacrificing his impatience to proceed, consented to travel through Italy, where we made, this time, several short stays tolerably profitable. We played there *L'Aventurière*, *Il ne faut jurer de rien*, *Les Folies Amoureuses*, *Le Verre d'Eau*, *La Vie de Bohème*, *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Un Duel sous Richelieu*, *La Corde Sensible*, *Jobin et Nanette*; I forget what others. At this period M. Scribe, who was going out of fashion in France, was all the vogue abroad, and, in some small places, we put at the head of the poster the names of Scribe and Melesville to pass off the works of Molière or Beaumarchais. Also, to create a relish for the burlesque songs which Marco sang between the acts, we were forced to compromise the names of Béranger and Désaugiers.

At Florence an adventure happened to me whose memory produced no more impression on me than the passing of a dream. This surprises you; but when you know the events which occurred in rapid succession, on the day after this experience, you will understand why it was not deeply stamped upon my mind.

At the moment of leaving that city I received the following note:—

I have applauded you both; be happy with HER.

THE UNKNOWN.

I begged Bellamare to tell me if, during our sojourn at Florence, he had seen the Countess. He assured me that he had not, and, as he never gave his word falsely, that was certain. Florence was not then a town so thickly settled that there would be no chance of success in making inquiries.

"Will you stay?" said Bellamare.

I had already, as they say, my foot in the stirrup, and, although I felt greatly excited, I did not wish to try the adventure.

"You see plainly," replied I, that *she* is still persuaded that I intended to deceive her. I cannot accept this position. I will not accept it."

And I passed it by, not without an effort, I confess, but fancying that I honored myself by my pride.

It had been debated whether we should go to Venice and to Trieste, as in the preceding year; but Fate bends us to her will. A letter from M. Zamorini placed at our disposal a great unsightly boat, dignified by the name of tartan, which would transport us at half price from Ancona to Corfu. There we could give some performances which, on the same condition of a division of proceeds between the contractor and ourselves, would enable us to reach Constantinople.

This craft had a very battered look, and the captain, a sort of Jew, who called himself a Greek, appeared to us more garrulous and obsequious than honest and intelligent; but we

had no choice; he had made the bargain with Zamorini, through the medium of another captain at Corfu, who would convey us farther.

We performed at Ancona; and as we were leaving the theatre the master of the *Alcyon* — that was the poetical name of our hideous boat — came to tell us that we must set sail at daybreak. We had reckoned on not starting until the day after; nothing was ready; but he objected that the season was capricious, that we must profit by the favorable wind which was blowing, and not wait for contrary winds, which might delay our departure indefinitely. It was then the last of February.

We warned the women to lock their trunks and to snatch a few hours' sleep. The men of the company busied themselves with transporting all the luggage on board the *Alcyon*. We passed the night so, for this luggage was considerable enough. Besides our costumes and personal effects, we had several pieces of scenery indispensable in those localities where the theatre consists only of its four walls, a certain quantity of tolerably voluminous properties, musical instruments, and a supply of provisions; for we might remain some days at sea, and we had been informed that we should find nothing in certain ports where we should touch, upon the coasts of Dalmatia and Albania.

The captain of the *Alcyon* had a cargo of merchandise that filled all the hold, which forced us to heap up ours upon the deck, — a vexatious circumstance, but fortunate, as the sequel will prove.

At daybreak, worn out with fatigue, we weighed anchor, and, pushed off by a strong north wind, we sailed very rapidly toward Brindisi. Leaving Ancona Thursday, we could hope to be at Corfu the Monday or the Tuesday following.

But the wind changed, toward the evening of our departure, and bore us to the offing with a fearful rapidity. We testified some uneasiness to the captain. His boat did not appear capable of supporting so heavy a sea, and thus crossing the Adriatic at its greatest breadth. He replied that the *Alcyon* was capable of making a voyage round the world, and that, if we did not put into Brindisi, we should touch at the opposite coast, either Ragusa or Antivari. He affirmed that the wind was a little northwest, and tended to increase in that direction. He was mistaken, or he lied. The wind carried us toward the east for nearly forty hours, and, as in spite of a very tiresome pitching, we went with great swift-ness, we gained confidence, and instead of resting, we did nothing but laugh and sing, until the following night. Then the wind became contrary, and our pilot assured us that it was a good sign, because, upon the coasts of Dalmatia, almost every night the land wind blew over the sea. We were approaching the shore then, but what shore? We were ignorant, and the crew knew no better than ourselves.

During the evening we only skirted a considerable distance along the coasts, broken into a multitude of little islands, whose sombre apparitions were outlined afar off upon a

pallid heaven. The moon set early, and the captain, who had pretended to look out for certain lighthouses, reconnoitred nothing further. The sky grew cloudy, a rolling replaced the pitching, and it seemed to us that our sailors sought to regain the open sea. We lost all patience with them; we wished to land, no matter where. We had had enough of the sea and of our close vessel. Léon soothed us by telling us that it was better to tack about all night, than to approach the thousand rocks scattered along the Adriatic. We grew resigned. I seated myself by Léon on the bales, and we talked about the necessity of arranging a number of plays for our ensuing campaign. There was less chance than in Italy that we should meet with actors who could reinforce us, and our company seemed to me very limited for the schemes of Bellamare.

"Bellamare counted on me," replied Léon, "for a work of mutilation and perpetual retouching, and I have accepted this horrible task. It is not difficult. Nothing is easier than to spoil a play; but it is heart-rending, and I feel so gloomy that I would not give a fig for the rest of my life."

I endeavored to console him; but our conversation was every moment interrupted. The sea became detestable, and the movements of our sailors continually disturbed us. Towards midnight the wind shifted, and they confessed to us that it was impossible to steer with certainty.

The captain began to lose his head; he lost it completely when a shock, light at first, followed by a

second shock more violent, warned us that we struck the reefs. I cannot say if it would have been possible to cast anchor or to try any other manœuvre to save ourselves; however that may be, the crew allowed the *Alcyon* to founder on the rocks. The poor skiff did not frolic there long; a violent collision, succeeded by an ominous creaking, made us swiftly realize that we were lost. The hold began to fill, the prow was broken. We made some fathoms still, and found ourselves at a sudden stand-still, caught between two rocks, on one of which I sprang, bearing *Impéria* in my arms. My comrades followed my example, and rescued the other women. Well for us that we took thought for them and for ourselves, for the captain and his crew cared only for their cargo, and strove in vain to secure its safety, without concerning themselves with us. The tartan, arrested by the rocks, bounded like a mad animal; its sides resisted still; we had time to save everything on the deck, and after a half-hour devoted to this feverish work, happily crowned with success, the *Alcyon*, lifted up by heavier and heavier surges, freed herself from the narrow passage by a backward bound, as if she wished to make a spring to clear it; then, dashed on anew, she struck it a second time, but half filled with water, the keel crushed, the masts broken. A formidable wave raised up what remained of this miserable structure, and cast upon the rock where we had found a refuge a portion of the flooring and some fragments of the hull; the rest was swallowed up. They

could rescue nothing from the contents of the hold.

The island where we found ourselves, and whose name I never knew—perhaps it had none—might measure five hundred yards in length by one hundred in breadth. It was a calcareous rock, white as marble and perpendicular on all sides, save for a cleft where the sea entered and formed a tiny road, strewn with detached blocks, presenting in miniature the appearance of the archipelago of which our rock formed part.

It was thanks to this little opening, where the caprice of the waves had thrown us, that we were able to obtain a footing; but we had at first no leisure to examine narrowly either the inside or the outside of our refuge. At the first moment we thought ourselves on land, and it was with astonishment that we beheld ourselves prisoners upon this isolated rock. As for me, I did not understand at all the danger of our situation; I doubted not for an instant that we could leave it with facility; and while Bellamare made a circuit of it for the purpose of investigation, I sought and found a refuge for the women, a sort of great basin naturally scooped out in the rock, where they could be sheltered from the wind. You may well believe that they were filled with terror and consternation. *Impéria*, alone, preserved her presence of mind, and endeavored to revive their courage. *Régine* became devout and said her prayers. Anna had hysterics, and rendered our condition still more lugubrious by piercing cries. It was in vain that Bellamare, intrepid and calm, told her that

we were saved. She heard nothing, and only grew quiet before the threats of Moranbois, who spoke of throwing her into the sea. Fear acted on her as on children: she begged pardon, wept, and grew tranquil.

When we were sure that none of us were injured, or failed to answer to their names, for darkness still enveloped us, we wished to consult with the captain upon the means of leaving this unpleasant shelter.

"The means?" said he in a despondent tone. "There are none! This is the cruel *bora*, the most pernicious of winds, which is blowing at present, God knows how many days, between the land and us. And then, my dear lords, there is still another thing! The *vila* has enchained us, and whatever we might attempt would turn against us."

"The *vila*?" said Bellamare. "Is it another contrary wind? One was surely enough, it seems to me!"

"No, no, *signor mio*, it is not a wind; it is even worse; it is the wicked fairy who lures ships upon the breakers, and who laughs to see them broken. Do you hear her? I hear her! It is not the pebbles washed up by the sea. There are no pebbles on these steep coasts. It is the laughter of the infamous *Vila*, her death-boding laugh, her wicked laugh!"

"Where are we, say, idiot?" asked Bellamare, shaking the superstitious captain.

The poor wretch understood nothing, and repeated incessantly, "*Sco-glio maledetto! pietra del Diavolo!*" So that we were free to apply either of these despairing epithets, by way

of a name, to our rock. That did not benefit us. The chief thing was to recognize the shore, in sight of which we found ourselves, and which no lighthouse signalized. The captain asked his men. One answered Zara, the other Spalatro. The captain shrugged his shoulders, declaring it Ragusa.

"Ah well, we are at a stand-still," said Bellamare, laughing ruefully.

"Not quite that," said Moranbois, in his turn. "When we reach the coast, we shall see for a certainty. Why the deuse not make a raft with the fragments of the tartan!"

The captain shook his head; his two men did likewise, seated themselves upon the *débris*, and remained motionless.

"Rouse them, beat them," said Moranbois, swearing. "They shall either speak or obey."

They replied to our threats at last, that we must neither stir, nor show ourselves, nor make any noise, because the wind was going down, and, if we were on the coast of Almissa, whose archipelago was infested with pirates, we should inevitably be robbed and murdered. We must await the daylight; these brigands were bold only at night.

"What!" cried Léon, indignant; "there are ten men of us here, more or less armed, and you fancy that we fear these sea-robbers? Come, then! find your tools speedily, and set about the work. If you refuse to aid us, there is one of our own number who will direct us, and we can do without you."

He pointed to Moranbois, who had lived long enough upon the port of

Toulon to have sufficient knowledge, and who began his work without waiting for the consent of the captain. Léon, Lambesq, Marco, and I received his orders, and worked with energy, while Bellamare occupied himself with collecting and loading the guns. He thought that the fears of the captain were not entirely without foundation, and that our shipwreck might really attract robbers from the shore, if we were far from port.

The captain watched our labors. The loss of his merchandise had completely demoralized him. Fearing the sea less than men, he bewailed himself on seeing us light a torch and hammer loudly on the ruins of the *Alcyon*.

"We must not blind our eyes to it; with this wretched bit of flooring, and these detestable waifs, we cannot make a raft for fifteen persons; if we can accommodate four on it, the sky will fall. However, if the raft will hold only me, I pledge you my word that I will use it to seek assistance."

During a moment of rest, I ran to see what had become of the women. Crowded together like birds in the snow, they shivered with cold, while we were in a perspiration. I urged them to walk about. None of them felt the courage for it, and, for the first time, I saw Impéria dejected.

"Is it possible, you?" I said.

"I think of my father," she replied; "if we should not succeed in leaving here, who will maintain him?"

"I," rejoined I, declaiming a reply taken from a modern drama; "'he shall have the friendship of Beppo, if he escapes!'"

I was gay as a lark; but the remainder of the night must have appeared mortally long to these poor shipwrecked creatures. To us it passed like an instant, and the sun surprised us, working for four hours, without suspecting how the time slipped by. No pirate showed himself; the raft was launched; Moranbois took the command, and installed himself upon it, with the captain and one of the sailors. There was only room for three, and Moranbois would trust to no one but himself to bring us prompt assistance. With emotion we beheld him leap upon this miserable craft, without bidding farewell to any one, or displaying the least anxiety. The sea was furious around the rock; but we perceived, at a considerable distance, a long extent of cliffs, which seemed to us to be the coast of Dalmatia, and we hoped that the passage of our friend would be rapid. We were then surprised to see that the raft, instead of proceeding in that direction, reached the open sea, and soon it disappeared behind the mountainous surges that cut off our horizon. It was because the apparent shore was only a series of rocks, worse than that on which we were stranded. We could convince ourselves of that, when the morning fog had cleared away. We were in a literal alley, surrounded by islands higher than our own, and which entirely screened from us the horizon on the landward side, excepting some peaks of a rosy white which appeared to us from afar off. They were the summits of the Dalmatian Alps, which we had already seen from the coast of Italy, and to which it seemed

that crossing of the Adriatic had hardly brought us nearer. The sailor whom they had left with us gave us no information; he spoke only an unintelligible Slavonic dialect; and as Marco, while at sea, had jeered him somewhat, he would not answer our questions.

On the side toward the open sea we had only narrow vistas, the *Alcyon* being determined to conceal its disaster at all points of the horizon. The splendid chain of submerged mountains which surrounded us presented a spectacle magnificent in horror and heart-sickening in nakedness; not a blade of grass upon the rock, not a sea-weed clinging to its sides; no hope of catching any fish in those clear and deep waters, no chance of passing over the ever-turbulent waves, without assistance from abroad. Ten times we made in vain the tour of our prison, and in vain we consulted our guide-books and our charts. In vain we told ourselves that around the eastern coasts of the Adriatic are scattered habitable islands; there was no trace of life about us.

We were not yet utterly disheartened by this situation. They must sail along all these shores, and it would not be long before small vessels would appear around us; at all events, the raft would soon accost one, and give a signal of our distress.

With the return of the sun the wind had completely changed. It blew from the west with violence,—a disquieting circumstance, all things considered. No fishing-smack would put out to sea, and no sailing vessel would venture within the neighbor-

hood of the breakers. Could Moranbois land anywhere without being dashed to pieces? He had stocked his raft with as many provisions as it would contain. What remained to us was not reassuring, and we judged it prudent to delay as long as possible before having recourse to it. The slight tide perceptible in the Adriatic gained the entrance of the basin, and we hoped, Marco and I, that it would bring us shell-fish, with which we resolved to content ourselves, not to break in upon the supply of food.

We watched for the tide to prevent it from carrying back the riches which it might deliver us. It brought us only empty shells. *Impéria*, who had regained her composure, begged me to collect the prettiest for her. She took them, sorted them, and, seated on an extremity of the rock, she drew from her pocket the little roll of needlework which never left her, and began to string these sorry jewels in a necklace, as if she were preparing to attend a ball that evening. Pale and already wasted from a night of suffering and mortal anguish, dishevelled by the wind, which did not *play* with her locks, but seemed to wish to tear them from her, she was serious and as sweet as I had seen her in the greenroom of the *Odéon*, recovering from her illness, and already working at her lace, until she should be summoned to perform her part.

"You observe her," said Bellamare, who also contemplated her: "that girl is certainly a round above humanity; she is there like an angel among the damned."

"Are you ill?" I said, regarding him with surprise.

He appeared so changed that I was frightened. He understood, and said with a smile: "You are no less alarming than I; we are all alarming! We are jaded with fatigue. We must eat; otherwise we shall all be mad in ten minutes."

He was right. Lambesq began to pick a quarrel with Marco; and Purpurin, half reclining in the water, recited, with a stupid air, verses which had no meaning.

We hastened to the provisions; they were not damaged, but, furnished by the master of the *Alcyon*, who speculated in everything, they were of very bad quality, except the wine, which was good, and of sufficient quantity for several days. The women were served first. Only one ate with good appetite; this was Régine, who drank proportionately, and, as we had no fresh water, she was soon completely intoxicated, and went to sleep in the corner, where the tide would have swept her away, if we had not led her up a little higher on the cliff.

Lambesq, already overexcited, grew tipsy also, and little Marco, who was still sober, was soon seized with a feverish gayety. The others were more circumspect, and I laid aside a portion of my rations, without any one's perceiving it. I began to think that Moranbois, if he were not swallowed up by the sea or dashed upon the shore, might be long in returning, and I wished to sustain the strength of Impéria, at the expense of my own, until the last hour.

No sail appeared to us during that

day, which grew foggy toward noon. The wind sank, and the cold decreased. We busied ourselves with constructing a shelter for the women, breaking up the rock, which was half-way between white marble and chalk, and offered us slight resistance. We hollowed out a sort of grotto, whose size we increased with a little wall of dry stones. We made them a common bed of casks and bales, and covered it with a stage-curtain, which, strange mockery of fate! represented the sea seen through cliffs. Another curtain, fastened to the walls of genuine rock by cords, formed the wardrobe and dressing-room of these ladies.

We occupied ourselves next with establishing a lookout which might rise above the rocks on the side toward the sea. We watched in vain the waves that lashed our prison; they did not bring the slightest fragment of the masts of the *Alcyon*. The frail rollers of our curtains could not resist the feeblest sea-breeze; despite the skill and care which we exerted in securing them, they were blown away after a few moments, and we had to give up planting the signal of distress.

Night overtook us before we could think of constructing any shelter whatever for ourselves. The east wind revived, and blew again very cold and very rough. Three or four times we were forced to replace and secure the tent of the women, who slumbered all the same, except Anna, who awoke, and uttered from time to time a piercing shriek; but the others were too much overpowered to notice it.

We had still some miserable chips left to kindle a fire. Bellamare urged us to husband this resource until the last moment, or in case one of us should become seriously ill. We might be rescued at any moment by the approach of a vessel; but it was also evident that we might be prisoners as long as the wind forced the ships to keep to the open sea, or while the fog prevented us from being signalled.

The cold became so sharp towards morning, that we all perceived how the fever was gaining on us. We still had some provisions, but no one was hungry, and we tried to warm ourselves with the contents of a cask of Cyprus wine, which assuaged for a space, but soon increased the irritation.

This was, however, only the beginning of our sufferings. The following day brought torrents of rain, at which we rejoiced at first. We could quench our thirst, and put by a little supply of fresh water, in the few vessels which we possessed; but we were chilled, and, our thirst satisfied, hunger returned with new intensity. Bellamare, seconded by the agreement of Léon, Marco, and myself, decreed that we should resist as long as possible before attacking our last resource.

This second day of fruitless waiting brought to all of us the first idea of a possible abandonment upon this barren rock. The sensation of mental suffering increased our physical evils. We were more dismayed than we had been at the moment of shipwreck. Lambesq grew insupportable from useless complaints and vain

recriminations. The sailor who had remained with us, and who was a veritable brute, spoke already, in pantomime, of drawing lots which of us should be eaten.

In the evening, the rain having ceased, we burned, to restore Anna, who fainted continually, what little wood we had. Impéria, whom I had forced to accept the food that I reserved, made her eat it. What remained of our stores disappeared during the night, devoured by Lambesq or by the sailor, perhaps by both. All the fresh water, saved with care, went the same way, or leaked out.

This third night there succeeded to the rain which had drenched our clothing a cold so intense that we could not speak, our teeth chattered so. We split open the box of costumes, and drew out at random whatever it contained in the way of doublets, dresses, pelisses, and cloaks. The women were wet also; the rain had penetrated both the curtain which served them as *velarium*, and the vault of spongy rock which we had hollowed out for them. This accursed rock did not keep the water that we might have saved in the holes, and it did not protect us.

We wished to burn the chest which had held our finery: Bellamare opposed it. It might serve as a shelter to the last survivor.

At length the third day brought back the sun, and, with the end of the fog, the hope of being perceived. We cheered up a little; we cherished illusions; Anna regained somewhat of her strength; intoxication still consoled those who would resort to

it. I could not prevent little Marco from exceeding the necessary quantity. He detested Lambesq, whose arrogance and selfishness exasperated him. We had much ado to restrain them from fighting in good earnest.

A sudden hope of safety diverted us; we perceived, at last, a sail upon the horizon! We made what signals we could. Alas! it was too far off, and we were too small, too much hidden by the rocks! It passed. A second, a third, then two others, toward evening, threw us, first into a delirious excitement, and then into a hopeless dejection. Anna slept so soundly that it was impossible to awaken her, to induce her to eat some shell-fish which we had succeeded in catching. Lucinde put her head in her shawl, and remained as if petrified. Régine began her devotions again; a livid pallor had replaced the purplish red of intoxication on her face. We were forced to secure Purpurin, to prevent him from throwing himself into the sea, and to keep the sailor quiet by main force, since he rushed at us to drink our blood.

Thirst began to torture us again; the Cyprus wine only irritated it, and there were moments when, the brute gaining the ascendancy, I had to entreat Bellamare and Léon, still masters of themselves, to prevent me from drinking myself to death.

Should we have suffered less without this wine, which set our blood on fire, and devoured our famished vitals? It may be; but it may be, too, that we should have perished from the cold and damp, before receiving assistance.

The hut that we had built protected us but little. The chest for costumes was large enough to contain one person, crouching down. Lambesq took possession of it, and, cowering within this refuge, he showered abuse and threats on any one who approached him, such was his fear of being dispossessed of it. In the endeavor to shut the cover over him, at the risk of suffocating, he broke it and cursed so much the more.

"It serves you right," Bellamare said to him; "selfish people gain nothing. You will do well to survive us, for if it is another who is destined to this sad advantage, he certainly will not compose your funeral eulogy."

To escape Lambesq's sour reply, he withdrew me to a little distance, and said to me: "My dear boy, what we suffer here is nothing, if we can leave this rock. I will not doubt it; but I should speak falsely, if I said that I felt sure of it; and even if the fact were evident, I could not shake off the profound grief which the more than probable death of Moranbois causes me. It is the first time in my life that sadness is stronger than my will. You are young, you have courage and energy. Léon is a silent stoic; Marco is an excellent lad, but too young for such a trial. So it is for you to give me courage, if I lack it. Will you promise me to be the *man* and head of our poor shipwrecked family, if Bellamare is brought low by death or by delirium?"

"You are ingenious," I answered, "in instruction as in everything else. I understand. At the moment when

I was giving way, you find means to restore me, by feigning to give way also. Thanks, my friend, I will strive, even till the last hour, to be worthy of seconding you."

He embraced me, and I perceived tears on the cheeks of this man, whom, hitherto, I had always seen laughing.

"Let me weep like a fool," replied he, with his accustomed smile, now grown heart-rending. "Moranbois will have no other farewell than these tears from a friend, perhaps soon departed likewise. This rude companion of my wandering life was devotion personified. He will have died as he ought to die! Let us try, also, to die worthily, my child, if we must remain upon this rock which prolongs our agony. It would have been easy to perish by sinking with the boat. To succumb to thirst and cold is longer and harder. Let us be men, come! Let us abstain from this wine that exhilarates and weakens us; I am sure of it. I have read accounts of shipwrecks, and the record of those who have committed suicide by starvation. I know that hunger ceases at the end of three or four days; we have reached that limit; in three or four days more thirst also will have disappeared; and those of us who have good constitutions may live still for several days, without madness or suffering. Let us prepare, by hope and patience, to sustain the weaker ones, the women especially. Anna is the most nervous, hence she will resist the best. It is the most courageous, it is Impéria, who gives me most anxiety, because she forgets herself for the others, and no longer

thinks to preserve herself from anything. Know that I have a treasure concealed about me, and that I am reserving it for her, — a box of dates, very small, alas! and a vial of fresh water. We must not wait for her first symptom of weakness; for with those natures which fall only to die, a late assistance is superfluous. Go and bring her for me, and when we have her here we will force her to eat and drink."

I hastened to obey, without telling Impéria what was the matter. We led her to the extremity of the island, and there Bellamare said to her: "My child, you will obey, or I give you my word of honor that I will throw myself into the sea. I will not see you starve."

"I am not hungry," she answered. "I suffer from nothing; it is I who will throw myself into the sea, if you do not both eat what remains."

She refused, obstinately, affirming that she was strong, and could still wait a long time. While speaking thus, with animation, she suddenly fainted. Some drops of water revived her, and when she was better, we obliged her, with an almost brutal authority, to eat some dates.

"Will you not eat some too?" she asked us in a tone of entreaty.

"Remember your father," I said to her; "it is not permitted you to renounce your life."

The next day, which was the fourth, it was magnificent weather again, and we warmed ourselves in the sun. Weakness began to overpower us all; we were quiet, we had no more wine. Lambesq and the sailor slept, at last, profoundly. Pur-

purin had lost his memory, and no longer recited verses. Bellamare, Léon, Marco, and I entered the little enclosure reserved for the women. Impéria had succeeded in reanimating them by her unalterable patience. She sustained her companions as Bellamare did his.

"Stay with us," she said to us, "we are no longer either sick or gloomy, see! We have dressed ourselves, and arranged our hair; we have put our drawing-room in order, and receive our friends. At present, it seems impossible to us that assistance should not arrive to-day, the weather is so fine! Régine, who became a saint, through fear of dying, persuades herself that she is fasting voluntarily, to atone for her former sins. Lucinde has found her mirror again, mislaid in moving, and is convinced that pallor is very becoming to her. She has even decided to whiten her paint, when she ascends the stage again. Our little Anna is recovered, and we have concluded to talk, as if between the acts, without remembering that we are not here for our pleasure."

"Ladies," replied Bellamare, very gravely, "we accept your gracious invitation, but on condition that your programme shall be serious. I propose that we demand a forfeit from the one who shall speak of the sea, or the wind, or the rock, or hunger and thirst, in short, of anything that may recall the disagreeable accident that detains us here."

"Agreed!" cried everybody.

And we begged Léon to recite some verses of his own composition.

"No," replied he, "my verses are

always sad. I have always regarded my life as a shipwreck, and we must not speak of it here. It would be in the worst taste; the thing is decided."

"Ah well," responded Bellamare, "we will have a little music. The box of instruments is with you, ladies; it serves you as a bed, if I mistake not: open it, and let each do what he can."

He gave me the violin, and took the bass-viol; Marco seized upon the cymbals, and Léon the flute; we were all something of musicians, for, in the localities where they did not understand French, we sang the comic opéra very passably; and when musicians were lacking for the orchestra, one of us directed the amateurs, and performed his part.

The effect of our concert was to plunge us all in tears. It was like a general signal. Purpurin, attracted by the music, came to embrace his master's knees, telling him that he would go with him to the end of the world.

"To the end of the world!" replied Bellamare, in a melancholy tone; "it seems to me that is exactly where we are!"

"A forfeit!" cried Impéria; "we are to make no allusions here. Purpurin has spoken well: we will all go to the end of the world, and we will return from it."

Then she began to sing and dance, taking us by the hand, and we followed her example, without remembering anything, and without perceiving the weakness of our legs; but, a few moments after, we were all lying asleep upon the rock.

I awoke first. Impéria was near

me. I seized her in my arms, and embraced her passionately, without knowing what I did.

"What is it, then?" she asked me, in alarm; "what is happening to us now?"

"Nothing," I answered, "except that I feel I am dying, and that I will not die, without having told the truth. I adore you; it was for you that I became an actor. You are all the world to me, and I shall love but you throughout eternity."

I know not what I said to her beside; I was delirious. It seemed to me as if I had talked to her a long time, and with a loud voice, which awoke no one. Bellamare, attired as Crispin, lay inert and motionless beside us; Léon, in Russian costume, had his head upon the knees of Marco, enveloped in a Roman toga. I regarded them with stupefaction.

"See," said I to Impéria, "the play is finished! all the characters are dead: it is a burlesque drama; we are going to die, also, you and I. That is why I tell you the secret, the great secret of my rôle and of my life. I love you, I love you madly. I love you so that I am dying of it, and I die!"

She made no answer, but began to weep. I became insane.

"It must be finished," I said, laughing.

And I wished to throw her into the sea, but I lost consciousness, and of the two days that followed I have preserved only a vague remembrance. There was no longer either gayety or anger or sadness; we were all dull and indifferent. The sea brought us some waifs, covered with miserable

barnacles, which kept us from starving, and which we picked up with a surprising indolence, we were so sure of perishing, notwithstanding. A few drops of rain fell, and hardly assuaged our thirst; some even did not wish to profit by these slight alleviations, which awoke again the slumbering desire for life. I recall my impressions with difficulty, and I remember only certain returns of my fixed idea: Impéria was continually in my dreams, for I was continually asleep; when Bellamare, who still resisted this languor, came to arouse me a little, I could no longer distinguish between fiction and reality, and, thinking that he summoned me for the performance, I asked him my opening cue; or else I fancied that I was with him in the famous blue chamber, and I addressed him in a low voice. I believe that I revealed my love to Impéria again, and that she understood me no longer. She made lace, or thought to make it; for her fingers, rigid and transparent from emaciation, often worked in the empty air. One morning, I know not how long after, I felt that some one, who was very strong, raised me up, and carried me off, like a child. I opened my eyes, and found my face close to a sunburned visage, that I kissed, without knowing why, for I did not recognize it: it belonged to Moranbois.

We had passed seven nights and six days on the rock, between life and death. I cannot tell you what happened to me, from my personal impressions, for I was completely stupid and almost idiotic for a week. The most of my companions suffered

the same consequence from our misfortunes; but I will keep you to the regular course of my narration, according to what I learned from Bellamare and Moranbois, as I gradually recovered health and reason.

The last night of our martyrdom on the *accursed rock*, Bellamare had been startled out of his sleep by the sailor, who wished to strangle him, that he might devour him. He defended himself, and the struggle had resulted in his enemy's being plunged into the sea. He had not reappeared, and no one had lamented him: only Lambesq had expressed some regret that, as Bellamare had killed him in a case of lawful self-defence, he should have given up the wretch's remains to the fishes. Lambesq did not recoil in the least from the idea of eating a fellow-creature, little appetizing as he might be, and, had he felt sufficient strength, I know not what attempt he might have made against us.

But it is Moranbois's campaign in which you will be interested. This is what happened to him, from the time of his departure, when he embarked upon the raft.

Scarcely had he left the surges that lashed the rocks so furiously, when he found himself swept out into the open sea, by an extraordinary and wholly inexplicable current. The master of the *Alcyon* could not understand it, and said that within the memory of man such a thing had never been seen upon the Adriatic. On gaining the land, where, after twenty hours of desperate endeavor, he arrived alone, dashed upon the rocks with the fragments of the raft,

and the corpses of his two companions, our friend comprehended what had occurred. An earthquake, of which we had been unconscious at the moment of our shipwreck, had filled the coasts of Delmatia with consternation, and, changing perhaps the submarine conformation of the reefs where we were stranded, had produced a sort of tidal wave, which lasted several days.

Moranbois himself had been cast upon a sterile island, inhabited by fishermen belonging to Ragusa. He was half dead when they found him. It was some hours before he could explain himself by signs, for they did not understand a word either of French or Italian. All he could obtain from them was to be conducted to another island, where he experienced the same obstacles in making himself understood, the same difficulty in gaining the mainland. You know that this country was formerly laid waste by furious earthquakes, one of which even destroyed, from top to bottom, the splendid city of Ragusa, the modern Venice as it was then called. Moranbois found the dwellers on the sea-shore much more terrified for themselves than eager to go to the assistance of others. He dragged himself as far as Gravosa, which is the suburb and war-port of Ragusa, and there, overcome by weariness, sorrow, and vexation, he was so ill that they carried him to the hospital, where he expected to die, without being able to save us.

When he could leave his bed, and talk with the local authorities, they took him for a madman, he was so excited by fever and despair. His

story appeared improbable, and they spoke of confining him. You may imagine that his language, habitually unconventional, had acquired, under such circumstances, an energy which did not prepossess them in his favor. They suspected him of wishing to carry off a vessel, for a pretended search for shipwrecked people, in order to deliver it into the hands of pirates. There was even a question of imprisoning him, for having assassinated the captain of the *Alcyon*. At last, when he had succeeded in proving his sincerity, and the weather had grown calmer, he managed to secure, at any price, a vessel whose crew jeered at him, and conducted him in the adventure, without haste, and without consenting to approach the rocks, precisely where he wished to land. He tacked about a long time, before recognizing the place where we were, and could only reach it with a life-boat, with which he had provided himself.

All this explains to you why he did not arrive until the moment when we had given up both the hope and the desire to struggle. I must except Bellamare, whose clear recollections proved to us that he had not ceased for an instant to watch over us and notice our condition.

The boat conveyed us to the port of Ragusa, and it was there that, after several days had elapsed, I regained my memory of the past and my consciousness of the present. We had all been very ill, but, with my strong young frame, robust, and consequently exacting much nourishment, I had been more exhausted than the others. Moranbois recov-

ered in two days; Anna was still so weak that she had to be carried; Lambesq was better than any of us, physically, but his mind was much confused, and he continued to believe himself on the rock, and to bewail himself stupidly. Lucinde swore that she would never again leave the rustic stage, and, glued to her mirror, tormented herself about the length of her nose, rendered more apparent by the wasting of her cheeks. Régine, on the contrary, was not sorry to lose flesh, and still found food for her mirth, more particularly for her cynicism; she had made progress in this respect. Léon had preserved his reason, but his liver troubled him, and, without complaining, he appeared more misanthropic than formerly. Marco, on the other hand, was more considerate and affectionate, speaking only of the others, and forgetful of himself. Purpurin had become almost dumb from stupefaction, and Moranbois fervently desired he might remain so.

As for Impéria, who interested me more than all the others, she was mysterious in illness as in all things; she had suffered less, physically, than her companions, owing to the slight sustenance that Bellamare had forced her to accept; but her mind seemed to have undergone a peculiar disturbance. She had been less ill, but she was more affected, and could not bear the least allusion to past sufferings.

"She was sublime to the very last," said Bellamare to me, when I expressed my surprise to him; "she thought only of us, nothing of herself. Now, there is a reaction; she

pays for her excessive devotion ; she has taken a little distaste to all of us, for having caused her too much fatigue and anxiety. In proportion as I saw her sweet and patient with the sufferers that we were, she now feels exacting and irritable with the convalescents that we are ; she is not conscious of it. Let us seem as if we did not perceive it. In a few days the equilibrium will be recovered. Dame Nature is an implacable ruler ; devotion overcomes her, but she resumes her rights when this great stimulant no longer needs to act."

Impéria did, indeed, regain her equilibrium in a little while, except with me. She seemed distrustful of me ; at times she was even critical and sarcastic. She overcame it, when she saw me surprised and grieved, but the friendship and familiarity of old had ceased. What had passed, then, during my days of delirium ? I could recall only what I have told you. It was certainly enough to put her on her guard against me ; but had she understood it ? could she remember it ? might she not attribute my passion to the fever that was then devouring me ? I dared not question her for the very fear of reminding her of a fact perhaps forgotten. I, also, assumed the carelessness of former times. I was too weak to feel in love, and I liked to persuade myself that I had never been so. It is certain that we were all singularly wasted and indifferent. When we were all assembled again, for the first time, upon the terrace of a little villa that we had rented on the wooded hill which overlooks

the port, it was not the thinness and pallor of their faces that struck me ; they were less appalling than they had been on the rock ; it was an expression common to all, and which established a sort of family resemblance on the most dissimilar features. Our eyes were large and prominent, as if frightened, and, in piteous contrast, a stupid smile parted our trembling lips. We all had a sort of stammer and more or less deafness. Some of them even felt the effects a long time after.

Bellamare, who had not rested a moment, watching over us all, superintending the prescriptions of the physicians of the country, who did not inspire him with confidence, himself administering to us the medicines of his portable dispensary, began to feel fatigue when ours was disappearing. We had been in this little port for five days, upon a charming coast, in view of fine mountains, of a bluish gray, which bounded it, and none of us was yet in a condition to work or to travel. Since leaving Ancona, that is to say, for nearly a month, we had earned nothing, and had expended a considerable sum. Bellamare, having nothing, wished to economize during our convalescence. The financial situation grew worse every day, and every day, likewise, the brow of Moranbois darkened ; but he did not wish to speak of it, fearing that, in organizing performances at Ragusa, Bellamare would devote himself too soon to fresh cares and fatigues. Was there a theatre at Ragusa ? We had saved our curtains for the background, and Léon applied himself to the task of repainting

them, while Marco and I occupied our leisure in relining them. I troubled myself about nothing. I had still my little fortune of bank-notes in my belt, and I regarded it as equivalent to the safety of the troupe and manager, when their funds should be entirely exhausted. But they were not yet to owe this safety to me. One evening, as we were sipping coffee in the orchard, under the citron-trees, all in blossom, they announced to us the visit of the proprietor of the villa, who was also the owner of the craft that Moranbois had hired to go in search of us. Nothing had as yet been paid.

"Prepare for quarter of an hour of Rabelais," Bellamare said to us, as he looked at Moranbois, who was swearing under his breath.

"Have no uneasiness," said I, "I am still in funds; let us receive the creditor politely."

A tall young man appeared, bound round the waist like a wasp, glittering with purple and gold, beautiful in face as the antique, and full of majestic grace, in his rich military costume.

"Which of you, gentlemen," he said, in good French, and with a courteous bow, "is the manager of the troupe?"

"I am," replied Bellamare, "and I have to thank you for the confidence with which the keeper of this villa authorized me, in your name, to instal myself here with my poor shipwrecked and still invalid company, without requiring any deposit from me; but we are proportionately —"

"That is no matter," responded this brilliant personage; "I do not

let this house, I lend it. I do not make shipwrecked people pay for the relief which every man owes his fellow-creature."

"But, monsieur —"

"Say nothing more about it, it would offend me. I am Prince Klémenti, wealthy for my country, — what would be poverty in yours, where they have other needs and other customs and also other expenses. Everything is relative. I was educated in France, at the College Henri IV. So I am a little civilized and a little French; my mother was a Parisian. I love the theatre, of which I have been long deprived, and I consider artists as clever and cultivated people, who are very necessary to our progress. The only object of my visit is to take you away to pass the spring among our mountains, where you will speedily recover, in a healthful climate, amid a spirited people, who will be charmed by your talents, and who, like me, will regard themselves as your debtors, when you have taken up your abode among them."

Bellamare, won by this gracious invitation, consulted us in regard to it, and, seeing himself generally supported, he promised to comply with the prince's request, for some days only, as soon as we were in a condition to act and sing again.

"No, no," replied the handsome Klémenti. "I am not willing to wait. I wish to take you away, give you rest and comfort with me, all the time you require; you shall perform only when you please, and not at all, if you prefer. I still consider you only as shipwrecked persons, in

whom I am interested, and whom I wish to make my friends, until they become my artists."

Léon, who was not fond of patrons, brought forward the objection that we were expected at Constantinople, and that we had made engagements.

"With whom?" cried the prince; "with M. Zamorini?"

"Precisely."

"Zamorini is a rascal, who means to make money out of you, and leave you without resources in the streets of Constantinople. Last year, at Bucharest, I met an Italian lady whom he had taken for a *prima donna*, and abandoned in that city, where she was earning her bread as a servant in the inn; had it not been for me, she would be there still. Now, she is singing successfully at Trieste. She was an accomplished person, who has preserved her friendship for me, and whom I have restored to liberty, after asking a few singing-lessons from her. Of you I will ask only to chat with me from time to time, to polish me up, and perfect me in my French, which I am afraid of forgetting. When you are all quite well, you shall resume your flight, if you insist on it, and if you desire to visit our enemies, the Turks, I will facilitate your journey; but I should be greatly surprised if Zamorini has not failed before now. There was a very handsome woman who built up his business, when he went under. She grew tired of being cheated by this wretch, and left him, to try her fortune in Russia, three months ago."

The handsome prince continued to converse, with that readiness of lan-

guage which is peculiar to the Slavonic races; for he was not Albanian, as we had been led to believe from the similarity of his dress to that worn by this nation. He called himself Montegrine, but he was properly of Herzegovinian or Bosnian lineage. What was very amusing, these ancestors, whose portraits we saw, ere long, at his residence, had the square and bony features of the Hungarians, and he owed his handsome Greek type to his mother, who, as we knew later, was a milliner from the Rue Vivienne, and no more Greek than you or I. This personage, so unreserved and perfectly amiable on the surface, attracted nearly all of us; and as he assured us that his principality was only a day's journey from Ragusa, we yielded to the desire that he expressed to take us thither the day following.

As the roadstead of Gravosa runs very far into the land, we re-embarked with all our material, in the tartan which had brought us, the prince performing its honors with much graciousness. He did not seem to notice that the interior was not as clean as it might have been,—a circumstance that afforded us some insight into the customs of the country. For the rest, this vessel, which the prince rarely used, and which at other times was engaged, for his benefit, in the coasting-trade, did not lack pretension, when it conveyed His Highness. It was then covered with a party-colored tent, which was furnished with a sort of roof, scalloped and decorated in the style of the fairy-scenes of our Boulevards. It is true that this ornamentation seemed

to have passed through the hands of a decorator of Carpentras.

They landed us, so that we could take a carriage to Ragusa, where a plentiful breakfast awaited us, and where we were allowed to visit the palace of the Doges, before re-entering our hired carriages. At last we turned in the direction of the mountains, by a fine shady road which ascended quite gradually, and which, at every winding, showed us a charming country. We had once more grown gay, careless, prepared for anything. Travelling on *terra firma* was our element: all our troubles faded like a dream.

But, at the end of a short passage, farther on, behold a frightful perpendicular pathway! The carriages are paid for and dismissed. The boxes and stage properties are consigned to people who will transport them in their arms in two days. Mules, led by women in picturesque rags, await us on the summit of the mountain, which we must ascend on foot. I did so with pleasure, for my part, feeling that my legs, so far from refusing to serve me, grew stronger at every step; but I dreaded for Bellamare and Impéria the remainder of a journey which did not appear to be strewn with flowers.

It was, in reality, very painful. In the first place, our women were frightened at finding themselves perched upon mules, in dizzy paths, and intrusted to other women, who never ceased to laugh and chatter, scarcely holding the bridles of the animals, and carelessly allowing them to graze the edge of the precipices. Gradually, however, our actresses

gained confidence in these robust mountaineers, who do all the hard work from which the men, devoted solely to war, exempt themselves; but the fatigue was great, for we had to perform in this manner a dozen leagues, almost always bent backward or forward upon our beasts, and unable to breathe except at short intervals upon a level piece of ground. Léon, Marco, and I preferred to walk, but we were obliged to go quickly; the prince, mounted on an excellent horse, which he managed with a dazzling skill, headed the file with two long-mustached attendants running on foot behind him, with carbines on their shoulders and belts furnished with cutlass and pistols. The mountaineers, proud of their strength and courage, made it a point of honor to follow them at a short distance. We followed after, annoyed and embarrassed by our mules and horses, which would not be led along by the bridle, — they were full of ardor and emulation, — but which, always wishing to pass ahead of us, rolled down avalanches of stones upon our legs. Lambesq completely lost his temper with his mule, which, in dodging his blows, lost its head and plunged into the abyss. The prince and his escort did not trouble themselves about it, in the least. We must leave the defile before night, for we were dying of thirst, and the calcareous rock had not the tiniest stream of water to offer us.

At last, in the dusk of the evening, we found ourselves upon the grassy sward of a narrow valley, surrounded on all sides by desolate mountaintops. A great house, surmounted by

a dome, with light streaming from its windows, was spread out on a hill at a little distance. It had the appearance of a vast convent. It was a convent in reality. Our prince, although a layman, held the rank of bishop, and this ancient monastery, where his ancestors had reigned as princes, had become the residence wherein he figured as bishop.

I will not explain to you the peculiarities of this social state of a Christian country which is considered Turkish, and which, always at war with its oppressors, really belongs and is subject only to itself. We were on the confines of Herzegovinia and Montenegro. I understood scarcely anything of what I saw there, singular and illogical, according to our ideas. Perhaps I had carried there the carelessness of the Frenchman, and the frivolity of the artist, who travels to encounter new experiences, without caring to penetrate the how and wherefore. To actors, everything is a spectacle; to strolling actors particularly, everything affords surprise and entertainment. If the player fathomed the ideas of others like a philosopher, things would not impress him as he needs to be impressed.

My comrades were like me in this respect. Nothing seemed simpler to them than having a convent for a palace, and a Montenegrine warrior for abbé.

We expected, however, to see a long procession of monks wind under these romantic arches. There was but one, who had charge of the medical and culinary departments. The rest of the Greek community had been

transferred to another convent, which the prince had erected at a little distance from the old one. The latter falling in ruins, he had had it repaired and fortified. So it was a citadel, also, and a dozen death's-heads, which adorned the top of one of the turrets, bore witness to the summary justice of the sovereign chief. To cut off heads in the Oriental style, while talking of Déjazet, to fight like one of Homer's heroes, while imitating Grassot, these contrasts sum up for you in two words the indescribable existence of Prince Klémenti.

He had vassals like a baron of the Middle Ages, and these warlike vassals were rather his rulers than his subjects. He was a devoted Christian, and he had a harem of veiled women whom no one ever saw. As with the mixture of manners and customs which characterizes frontier provinces, he had this peculiarity of being French through his mother, and through his collegiate course, he presented the most singular type that I have ever encountered; and I must tell you that, without his comparative wealth and his proved patriotism, he would probably not have been accepted by his neighbors more seriously dramatic, the perpetually insurgent chiefs of Bosnia and Montenegro.

His subjects, to the number of about twelve hundred, were of all origins, and boasted that their ancestors were Bosnians, Croats, Venetians, Servians, Russians; perhaps there had also been *Auvergnals* among them! They were of all religions, Jewish, Armenian, Coptic, Russian, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic; there was

even a considerable number of Musulmans among them, and these latter were none the less devoted to the cause of national independence. The prince likewise possessed a village, that is to say an encampment of idolaters, who, it is said, sacrifice rats and owls to an unknown god.

We were all installed in two chambers, but so vast that we might have engaged in the exercises of the hippodrome in them. Oriental tapestry, somewhat faded, but still very rich, divided the chamber of the women into several parts, and allowed them each a place of retirement. In that of the men an enormous mat of aloes separated the space into two equal compartments, one for sleeping, the other for recreation. As regards beds, there were divans and cushions in abundance, no more sheets or blankets than in the blue room.

The prince, after bidding us good evening, disappeared, and the friar cook brought us coffee and preserved rose-leaves. We thought that this was the custom before a meal, and we expected a supper, which did not come. We attacked the sweetmeats; and, as we were very tired, we contented ourselves with them, hoping that the morrow's breakfast would prove a compensation.

At daybreak, feeling very well, notwithstanding, I went to explore the country with Léon. The scenery was charming, an oasis of verdure, in a setting of steep and lofty cliffs, crowned by summits still covered with snow. Through a gap of peculiar form, I recognized, or thought I recognized, the peaks of rosy Alps

that we had had leisure to admire in that direction, during our captivity on the rock.

The valley that the manor overlooked was not two *kilomètres* in extent; it was a long savanna, which we crossed rapidly for further explorations. This fine fertile tract, bordered by almond-trees in bloom, seemed enclosed by a calcareous perpendicular wall; but we had noticed, in our journey of the previous evening, that the innumerable valleys shut in by the irregular network of these Alps, communicated with each other by narrow openings, and a little climbing allowed us to penetrate into another valley larger than the first, and well cultivated, which constituted the best portion of the prince's domains. An enchanting little lake within it received the waters issuing from a grotto, and did not return them again to the surface. Léon explained to me that it was a *ponor*, that is to say, one of those numerous streams and subterranean rivers that alternately show and conceal their mysterious current, in this almost inaccessible country, whose geography does not yet exist.

This water constituted the wealth of Prince Klémenti; for dryness is the curse of these lands, at the same time that it is the guaranty of their independence. There exist in those regions, I was told, considerable spaces, veritable Saharas, where, for lack of water, hostile troops are unable to endure a campaign.

On returning from our stroll, we found our actresses making their toilet with soup-tureens and buckets in the kitchen. It had not been sup-

posed that Christians needed to perform ablutions, and the basins and other toilet-vessels of blue English ware which decorated the pantry served to contain game-pies.

Bellamare, on his part, demanded from the monk a more substantial breakfast than the supper of the previous evening. The latter excused himself with obsequious politeness, saying that the repast would be served at noon, and that he had no orders to anticipate it. Again we supported ourselves by patience and much coffee. Brother Ischion, this bearded cook, in black robe and judge's cap, had certainly something else to do than listen to our complaints. He was a sort of Jack-of-all trades, who, at this moment was polishing weapons and horses' bits. As he spoke Italian, he informed us that the prince had departed very early in the morning, to organize a review of his army, which would take place upon the lawn at ten o'clock. He added that probably His Highness intended to offer this entertainment to our most illustrious lordships. We were free to believe this, but in reality the prince had more serious preoccupations.

Our actresses, warned of the approaching solemnity, attired themselves as well as they were able. Their dress-toilets had sustained some serious injuries upon the *Scoglio Maledetto*; but, with the taste and skill of Frenchwomen and *artistes*, they quickly repaired them, and could appear in a style that did us honor. They had the kindness to sew on the buttons missing from our coats, and to iron out more than

one shirt-collar outrageously tumbled. At last, by ten o'clock, we were sufficiently presentable, and, after having announced his coming, the prince appeared to us in all the splendor of his military costume; the white leg-gings relieved by red and gold lace of marvellous workmanship, the *fustanelle* of snowy white over breeches of scarlet cashmere, the jacket of red cloth loaded with buttons and gorgeous trimmings, with silk sleeves embroidered with gold and silver, the cap, of astrakan and velvet, surmounted by a tuft fastened with precious stones, a belt covered with gold and filled with an arsenal of yataghans and pistols, terminating in heads of birds and serpents. He was so handsome, so handsome, he had the air of having issued from the enchanted box of some genius in the Arabian Nights. He conducted us to the platform of one of the turrets, and it was there that the dissevered heads, which our women had not yet perceived, struck them with horror and disgust. Impéria, to whom the prince had given his arm, and who preceded the others, stifled a cry, and quitting her guide precipitately, sprang upon a winding staircase, calling out to her companions, who followed her: "Not there! do not go there, it is frightful!"

The fear of women is always accompanied by an eager curiosity. Although greatly alarmed already, Anna, Lucinde, and Régine wished to see what it was, and returned to us shrieking like mad. The prince began to smile about the corners of his mouth, a little surprised and a little offended; but he could not

persuade them to remain in a place so imbued with the local atmosphere. In vain he told them that Turks' heads were not human heads, and that they were dried by the wind, and consequently quite clean; they declared that they would forego the pleasure of seeing the review rather than behold it in such company. Klémenti took us to another tower, which vexed him somewhat, as it forced him to modify the programme of his play, that is to say, his plan of drill; then he left us, and we saw him reappear upon the drawbridge, conspicuous and showy on a magnificent mountain-horse whose every movement betrayed his fiery spirit, and who seemed to wish to devour the others.

The spectacle was very fine. The army consisted of two hundred and fifty men, but what men! They were all tall and muscular, in handsome costumes, armed to the teeth, and admirable horsemen. Their little horses, restive and nervous as Cossack steeds, pawed the ground. They executed several figures in a very skilful manner, imitating cavalry charges especially, descending and reascending the rapid slope of the valley, in the same gallop, leaping enormous ditches, and returning in good drilling order, after a steeplechase to take one's breath away. Next ensued a little sham-fight among the rocks opposite us. The cavaliers reined in their horses on narrow platforms, and held them with one hand, while they fired their guns with the other; then, while in full gallop, they practised shooting at Turks' heads, this time artificial.

The prince took part in all these exercises, and displayed a mingled skill and grace which lent new lustre to his enchanting beauty. A Homeric feast next united all the warriors on the greensward. Twenty sheep were served up whole there. Officers and soldiers, seated on the grass, without distinction of rank, ate with their fingers, very gravely and very properly, without soiling their handsome costumes.

The savor of these viands reminded us that we had been almost fasting since Ragusa; and although they did not seem to think of us, we invited ourselves, and descended from our observatory, with the resolution of people who had no wish to repeat the fast of the accursed rock.

The prince, who presided at the banquet, was preparing to offer a toast which would terminate in a speech. We advanced straight upon Brother Ischion, who was officiating in full blast, and Bellamare caught up a saucepan which boiled on the canteen, and which contained half a sheep with rice. The monk endeavored to prevent him.

"Do you wish me to brain you?" Moranbois said to him, fixing his hawk's eye upon him.

The unhappy man understood this glance, if not the words of the threat, sighed, and gave up the struggle.

Sheltered and concealed within a clump of lentisk-trees, we passed the time merrily, each of us in turn detaching himself to go out and snatch openly, now a piece of game, now a fish from the lake in the neighboring valley. The prince observed our proceedings, and shaking off the

cares of his empire for a moment, slipped among us, excusing himself for not having invited us to this wholly military feast, because it was not the custom to admit strangers to it, and further because the women never ate with the men.

"Monseigneur," answered Bellamare, "we are all *Auvergnats*, neither men nor women, that is to say, all equal. You warriors of the *Iliad* are free to take us for *Greeks*; but we are hungry, and cannot live on dry preserves. Let us have meat to eat, or send us back; for with the too refined regimen, to which your minister of culinary affairs seems disposed to subject us, we shall never be able to recite three lines for you."

The prince deigned to smile, and promised us that next day we should be treated in the European style.

"You must grant me this day," he added, "devoted to very urgent business. To-morrow I shall be entirely at your service."

"If that is the case," said Moranbois, as soon as his back was turned, "let us supply our pockets for the rest of the day."

And he plunged several roasted partridges into his great travelling-bag.

We went to pass the remainder of the day on the banks of the little lake that Léon and I had discovered in the morning. It was a truly delicious spot. The middle of the water was clear as crystal; but where the subterranean torrent that fed it entered and left the lake it foamed among rocks covered with rose-laurel and blossoming myrtle. We all felt recovered in this oasis, and we aban-

doned ourselves to a paroxysm of wild gayety, such as we had not known for a long time; even Moranbois and Léon threw off their gravity, and Purpurin attempted to make poetry.

We had a continuation of the spectacle, when we saw, defiling through the path that crossed the plain, these handsome horsemen who had entertained us with their feats, and who now departed in groups, hidden at various turns of the mountain, in pathways which we could not see. From time to time these groups reappeared on dizzy precipices. The gold upon their costumes and their handsome weapons glittered in the setting sun.

"I never went to the opera," said Purpurin, sagely, "but I find that this is even finer."

We were left alone there until evening, when a tall old man with long white mustaches, arms bare to the shoulder, and carrying an enormous gun by way of shepherd's crook, passed by with a flock, paused, and saluting us with a grave and affable air, addressed some remarks to us that none of us understood; but, as he pointed persistently now at the sun, and now at the monastery, we guessed that for some reason we ought to return. It was well we did so, for they were raising the drawbridge when we presented ourselves. The little fortress was rigidly shut up, as soon as the sun sank behind the lowest of the mountains. We were not alarmed at the idea of thus being prisoners every night: none of us foresaw that the thing might become very disagreeable.

Friar Ischion being the only servant who could understand us, we tried to make him talk, when he brought us the excellent Turkish coffee and the eternal sweetmeats, which, according to him, must suffice us after the noonday repast. He informed us that the prince had retained the principal chiefs of his army with him, and was holding council with them in the old hall of the chapter-house.

"Heaven knows," he added, in an emphatic and impressive tone, "what sunbeam or what thunderbolt will result from this conference! peace or war!"

"War with the Turks?" asked Bellamare. "These gentlemen attack them then sometimes?"

"Every year," replied the monk, "and the favorable season is at hand to take some fort or passage from them. Heaven grant that it may not be before two months, for then our lake will be dry! The excellent fish which it supports will have returned into the caverns with it, and the enemy, finding nothing to eat or drink in the country, will not venture to attack us, here in the heart of the mountains."

"What do you live on, then, during the summer?" inquired Régine.

"In the summer," replied the monk, "our gracious master, Prince Klémenti, goes to Trieste or Venice. The rest of us drink sour milk and eat cheese fried in butter, like the other inhabitants of the plain."

"It is not fattening," said Régine, "for one can see the daylight through your ribs."

"It would seem," said Bellamare,

when the monk had gone, "that our host means to amuse himself until the time when he enters on his campaign. It was a singular idea to bring us to his house, in the midst of such preoccupations, unless he has enlisted us to form a portion of his army, which is finer than it is large. Say, my children, would it not amuse you to fire your guns at the infidels?"

"Certainly not!" cried Lambesq. "We needed only that! We shall have chanced upon a pretty hornet's-nest!"

"For my part," said Moranbois, who loved, like every one else, to irritate Lambesq, "I should not be sorry to mount the cannon on these little ramparts, and break the heads of some Mahometans."

"Then congratulate yourself," said Léon, continuing the joke; "I know that the prince's intention is to intrust us with the defence of his fortress, when he has entered on his campaign, and ten to one we shall have to sustain some assault."

"I cannot contain myself for joy!" cried Marco; "I have always longed to play genuine melodrama."

The fear and anger of Lambesq restored us to good-humor, and we proposed to pass the evening merrily; but first of all we wished to know if we could make ourselves at home, and be as noisy as we pleased, without annoying our host, and disturbing his council of war. Bellamare, Léon, Marco, Impéria, Lucinde, and I, leading the way with a torch, determined to make a voyage of discovery in this romantic monastery, that we had not yet had leisure to explore. Our apartments opened on

a bastion that overlooked another battlemented building, on which a sentinel paced day and night. We could contemplate a fine effect of moonlight streaming through the sharp lines of the fortifications; but in the presence of this sentinel and his regular step there was something troublesome and irritating to us. The scene was not enlivening and the evening was chilly. We decided to seek elsewhere some place suited to our frolics, or to a general *far-niente*, something which might remind us of the greenroom of a large theatre. Passing through long cloisters, with surbased arches, and mysterious staircases which sometimes led only to walled-up doors or to labyrinths of chaos,—for certain portions in the interior of the convent were still ruined,—we discovered the library, which was a very fine apartment, completely stripped of its venerable works, transported, like the printed books, to the new monastery. In one of the closets were a few odd volumes of Eugène Sue and Balzac, with Béranger's poems, besides a book, given as a second prize, at the College Henri IV., to the student Klémenti. A Turkish guitar, deprived of its strings, or rather of its string, for the *guzla* has but one, several long guns, unfit for service, stools to climb on to the empty shelves, rolls of carpet, rickety tables,—in short, a thousand things put by for future use, or worthless rubbish, all bore witness to the entire desertion of this hall, as large as a church, and plentifully lighted by high arched windows; but the moon cast a sepulchral light upon the

floor. It needed the illumination of a theatre to brighten up this desert. The women declared that they should die of fear there, and that we must seek some other place.

"Stay!" said Lucinde, "on the highest shelf I see a quantity of wax-tapers, which would procure us an illumination. Try to climb up there, gentlemen."

We assisted Marco to wheel up one of the massive stools, and he had already reached the supply of tapers, when we heard footsteps in the gallery that opened from the back of the library; it was the slow creaking of Friar Ischion's sandals, and each step brought him nearer to us. Like marauding scholars, surprised by the master, we extinguished our light, and all concealed ourselves, some here, some there, behind the divans and the piles of cushions; Marco, crouching on the top of his stool, held himself in readiness to blow out the monk's lamp, if it passed within his reach. We had decided to frighten him rather than allow him to discover our vagabondage; but it was he who froze our blood by the strange scene we were about to witness.

He carried a large basket, which seemed very heavy, and he walked slowly, raising his lamp to guide his way through the confusion of old furniture. When he was quite near us, he paused before the closet which contained the prince's prize and slender library. There, still holding his lamp, and depositing his basket beside him, he drew from it, one by one, the twelve dried heads that we had seen upon the tower;

then, with the hands that prepared the food of his master and his guests, he placed and arranged carefully, one might say lovingly, these hideous trophies on the nearest shelf, after which he regarded them attentively, laid them out again in precise order, as he might have done with a row of dishes on a table, and with his knotty fingers combed the beards still hanging at some chins.

The poor wretch was only acting in obedience to the prince, who, to satisfy our ladies, had ordered him to hide these heads, still preserving them carefully, in his museum; but the coolness which he displayed in this lugubrious occupation irritated Marco, who, imitating the cry of an owl, threw an armful of tapers at him, and descended precipitately from the stool with the intention of beating him. We restrained him; the unhappy monk, stretched prostrate on the floor, invoked with a plaintive voice all the saints and gods of the Slavonic paradise, and strove to exorcise the demons and the wizards. His lamp had fallen from his hands, and was smoking in the folds of his robe. We were thus able to slip off without his seeing us, but imitating, meanwhile, the cries of various animals, each according to his talent, to confirm his belief that he was dealing with spirits of the night.

We no longer had a light, and we groped about in the darkness. I know not when and how we found ourselves in an upper gallery near an archway dimly lighted from below. We saw beneath us, in the obscurity of a sort of chapel, the

prince, standing in a little pulpit, opposite a dozen young and old lords or peasants, all equally noble, officers belonging to his corps of partisans; it was the council of war in the hall of the chapter-house. Klémenti was haranguing them with a clear voice and with a tone of energetic resolution. As we did not understand a word of the Slavonic language, we could, as from a box in the fourth tier, witness without indiscretion this serious scene, which was not wanting in color. I know not if the orator was eloquent. Perhaps he only uttered commonplaces, and doubtless nothing more was needed with people so convinced of their rights, and so well disposed to cut off the heads of miscreants; but his pronunciation was harmonious, and his inflections good enough. When he had finished, we nearly applauded him. Bellamare restrained us and led us quickly away, without their having perceived our presence.

At last we regained our apartment, which was sufficiently remote and isolated to permit us to talk loudly and without constraint. This certainty being the principal object of our expedition, we resolved to take advantage of it. We found a supper served in our great chamber, by Moranbois and Régine, who had spread out their provisions upon a table about a foot high, surrounded by cushions by way of seats, according to the Oriental custom. Anna and Purpurin had likewise been marauding. They had gone into the pantry, and while Ischion was arranging the heads upon the shelf in the library they had stealthily carried off some

cakes and several bottles of Greek wine. So the supper was very presentable, and the coffee, Turkish pipes, puns, and songs beguiled the time merrily until three o'clock in the morning.

Nevertheless, I felt inwardly disturbed, in spite of the jests that habit called to my lips. The beauty of the prince and the charm of his peculiar life had, notwithstanding the severed heads, greatly excited the feminine imaginations. The tall Lucinde, the little Anna, even the stout Régine, made no secret of being madly in love with him. The discreet Impéria, when questioned, had replied with the mysterious smile that she always wore on certain occasions.

"I should speak falsely if I told you I did not think this paladin admirable upon his horse. When he dismounts from it, and above all when he speaks French, he loses somewhat. A man like that should speak only the language of fabulous times; but certainly it is not his fault that he is our contemporary. Yesterday I was too tired to look at him. To-day I noticed him; and if he continues to be what he appears, namely, Tasso's Tancred combined with Homer's Ajax, I will agree with these ladies that he is an ideal; but —"

"But what?" said Bellamare.

"But the beauty that addresses itself to the eyes," she continued, "is only the spell of the moment; the eye of the body is not always that of the soul."

I thought she looked at me, and I felt piqued; love had revived in me with returning health; I could not

sleep. As Léon was equally wakeful, I asked him, to divert my personal anxiety, if he had noticed Anna's enthusiasm for our host. He answered me in an accent of bitterness that astonished me.

"Why are you angry with me?" I said to him.

"With you?" he replied, "I am not! I am angry with women in general, and the one you have just named in particular. She is the vainest and most feather-headed of all."

"What do you care? One cannot help laughing. You do not love her; you have never loved her."

"That is a mistake," he answered, in a lower voice; "I have loved her. Her weakness seemed a grace to me. She was pure, then, and if she had had patience to remain so for some time, I should have committed the immense folly of marrying her. She committed that of yielding too quickly to her absurd infatuations."

"Which is very fortunate for you; you should be grateful to her."

"No, she rendered me distrustful and misanthropic in the beginning of my career. Shall I make a full confession? It was for her that I became an actor, as you for —"

"For no one! what do you mean?"

"Your prudence and your silence do not deceive me, my friend! We are both wounded; you by a love repressed for want of hope, I by a love buried for want of esteem."

It was the only time that Léon opened his heart to me. After that I saw plainly that, if he loved Anna no longer, he would always suffer from having loved her.

The next day Friar Ischion came

to tell us that the prince desired to know at what hour these ladies would be pleased to dine with him. Before replying, we wished to know the customs of His Highness. From the answers of the monk, we gathered that the hero was at the same time temperate and gluttonous. Like wolves, he could fast indefinitely, and, if necessary, eat the earth; but when he sat at table, he ate like four and drank like six. Ordinarily he took but one substantial meal a day, at three o'clock in the afternoon. In the morning and evening he contented himself with trifles. We decided to conform to this programme, on condition that to the trifles should be added eggs, cheese, and plenty of ham for us. All this arranged, we asked the good brother why he was so pale and appeared so languid. He ascribed his fatigue to the enormous repast which he had superintended on the previous day, and carefully refrained from mentioning his hallucination in the library. I ventured to ask him, with an innocent air, why the heads were no longer on the tower. From pale he became livid, made a cabalistic sign in the air, and replied, in a bewildered way, as he left the room, "What the Devil does, God only knows."

"Here," said Bellamare, "is a capital opportunity for us to continue the rôle of the Devil. Let us go and get the heads, and make away with them."

"It is already done," replied Marco; "I would not sleep until I had procured myself some satisfaction. I took a pair of brass tongs, and slipped away to the library. The monk, who

had taken to his neels, without waiting for the sequel, had left his lamp extinguished, and his great basket open. I clapped the heads into it, and carried them off."

"And where the deuse have you put them?" cried Régine; "not here, I hope?"

"No! I hid them in a gap of old wall that I closed up with stones. I mean to keep them there until I discover where this old animal roosts. Then I shall adorn his bed with them. I hope that he will die of fright: it is a lesson of propriety that I count on giving him."

"You would do better," observed Moranbois, "to inflict this lesson on the master than on the servant."

"I will think of it," gravely replied the young comedian.

At three o'clock the resonant sound of a frightful rattle announced the dinner, and a servant in livery, whose European costume contrasted with his long mustaches and his warlike expression, informed us by signs that dinner was served. For the first time, Purpurin, recovering his ideas of civilized life, and appreciating things, after his fashion, declared that this Montenegro *Cossack* cut an infernal figure in his ceremonious garb, and that he intended to give him a lesson in good style and good manners. So he hastily donned an old stage livery of the time of Louis XV., put on a powdered peruke, a little paint, and white cotton gloves, and when we entered the refectory he came and planted himself, with a gracious and important air, behind the chair designed for Bellamare. The paroxysm of wild laughter that

seized upon us and continued a long time, the agreeable surprise which we experienced at sight of a table, a real table, served in European style, with all the utensils that relieved us from the necessity of tearing the meat with our nails, made us forget that we were very hungry, that the dishes were cooling, and that the prince was making us wait longer than became a man educated in France. At last the door at the back was opened, and there appeared, first a little groom of the most unmistakable Parisian type, in irreproachable English costume, followed by a tall, slender young man attired in a somewhat antiquated French fashion, that is to say, from four to five years behind the prevailing style. He was a handsome fellow, but without grace, and the lower part of his face was injured by an expression of silliness or shyness. We thought that it was a secretary, perhaps a relative of the prince, coming, in his turn, from the College of Henri IV., perhaps a brother, for he resembled him. He spoke, excusing himself for having devoted too much time to a toilet to which he had grown somewhat unaccustomed. O deception! it was the prince himself, looking younger and slighter from the removal of his heavy mustache, shaved, his hair dressed, pomaded, cravatted, his free motions imprisoned in a black coat, the chest confined in a white waistcoat with buttons of fine pearls, and covered with too great a profusion of gold chains; the prince, fallen from the paladin of Ariosto into the Italian dandy, or rather into the *Schiavone*, gotten up as gentleman; numerous

specimens of whom we had seen the year before at Venice, where they are insupportable to quiet people from their chattering, their frivolity, and the disturbance that they make in the theatres.

Our Klémenti was more intelligent and better bred than those little lords who go abroad from home in search of civilization, and who do not always bring back its best characteristics. There was in him a chivalric and feudal side which prevented him from being ridiculous; but as the French element transmitted by his mother was deadened in his hard and warlike life, what he strove to reproduce of it was neither of the utmost freshness nor of the first quality. This reverse of the fine medal made us regret the antique profile of the previous evening. The cameo had become a hundred-sou piece.

Deprived of his picturesque costume, he now seemed to us only a third-rate personage. In plumed cap and "fustanelle," he had seemed to speak our language as well as we; dressed like us, the defects of elocution grated on our ears. He had a disagreeable *zézayement*, and used common or pretentious expressions. It was still worse when he wished to imitate our pleasantry. Since his early youth (and he was now thirty-two) he had put by a collection of stale jokes, which had become too hackneyed in the second-class theatres to seem amusing to us. The witticisms that are brought out on the stage are already worn out in the greenroom. Judge how new they must appear when they have passed

through two or three hundred performances! The prince, however, was anxious to display them before us, to show us his familiarity with current topics; and instead of talking to us of his romantic country, his combats and adventures, he talked to us of Odry in *Les Saltimbanques*, or of certain opera scandals already out of date and utterly forgotten.

He also essayed to be sprightly, although he was correct and cold as a man who has three wives, that is to say, two too many. He thought to please our actresses; but Régine alone kept him company, and he saw that he had made a blunder in regard to the others. If he frequently lacked taste, he did not lack penetration.

The dinner was plentiful enough to permit us to eat what was eatable. The rest was a senseless mixture of dishes scandalized to find themselves together. Garlic, honey, allspice, curds, assorted themselves as best they could with meats and vegetables. The prince devoured all, indiscriminately. Moranbois, intending an allusion to the banquets of the ancients, remarked in an undertone, that our host had a throat like the antique. The Parisian groom, who was a mischievous monkey, smiled from ear to ear with approbation. The rogue was intensely delighted with the whimsical figure of Purpurin, and, as he served us, played off pranks upon him that cruelly compromised the dignity of our theatrical valet. The other attendants, of whom there were a half-dozen stationed about us, grave and proud in their national costume, were there for

show, and stirred no more than statues. Fortunately, the groom, quick as a lizard, ran about, from one to another, pouring for us floods of a champagne manufactured at Trieste or Vienna or some other place, which would have flown straight to our heads, if it had been good enough to make us lose prudence. Moranbois was not fastidious, but he could drink with impunity; Lambesq still thought himself too ill to run the risk, and Marco, seated beside Léon, was constrained by him to good behavior.

The prince alone warmed up a little, and, the martial instinct reviving in him, he said something, at dessert, about the perpetual struggle of the country against the Turks. A good grain of ambition mingled with his patriotism, and he gave us to understand that he would probably be chosen leader of the permanent insurrection, whose monomania was the unity and independence of the country.

Some one wished to speak to him, and he went out, begging us to await him at the table. Then the groom, who was a stunted fellow of twenty-two, wild with joy at finding some one to talk to, and eager to talk with actors, joined unhesitatingly in our conversation.

"Do not believe," said he, "all that my master tells you. He is a terrible man in battle, I do not deny, but no more so than the others! There are fifty princes like him, who have leagueed themselves together to strike a blow at those dogs of Turks, but who all wish to take the chief command. My master will not ob-

tain it ; he is too French ; his mother was no more noble than I am, and his father was not a direct descendant of the famous Klémentis of old times. They do not look with a favorable eye on the European races that assume to be gentlemen ; and this body-guard that you see stuck there like candles, without understanding a word of what we say, despise us ; they would like to wring my neck because I shave monsieur when he wishes to make a good appearance for a while."

"If he wishes to appear well, it is to please us, apparently," said Régine ; "but say, my little friend, this shaved mustache proves that, for some time, your master does not think of war, for that bluish lip would not be in order."

"It proves, perhaps," replied the groom, "that my lord means to try a bold stroke, without being recognized ; one cannot say. It is all the same to me ; peace and war are so much alike in this land of brigands, that one cannot tell the difference."

"Brigands !" exclaimed Lucinde ; "I have always wished to see them. So there are some near us ?"

"It is just so, mademoiselle, and you see some of them there, close by you."

"Come now ! Those handsome men !"

"As true as I live ! They are like wolves ; they do no harm when they are not hungry ; but when they want for anything, woe to the people who take a fancy to visit their mountains ! They are very peaceable and even hospitable when all goes well with them ; but when they are too

much molested by the Turks, they have to take from strangers the wherewithal to buy bread and powder. Good people, all the same ; only, they are savage and must not be stirred up ! There are also bands of robbers who infest the frontier, and call themselves patriots, but of whom it is well to beware. Never walk farther than the little lake, and never venture on the mountain. I tell you this seriously."

This bright and forward young fellow, whose name was Colinet, and whom his master had surnamed Meta (half of a man), would willingly have rambled on, all night, but the prince returned, and carried us off to drink coffee in his drawing-room, which was charmingly appointed, in a very interesting Lower Empire style. He showed us the entire suite of apartments, his sleeping-room, furnished in French fashion, with a French bed, in which he did not sleep, preferring to stretch himself upon a bear-skin in winter, and on a mat in summer, his boudoir, and his study. These rooms were rich, covered with gilding, but destitute of character or real comfort. We preferred to remain in the eastern saloon ; where superb chibouques and detestable cigars awaited us ; but the thick coffee began to seem delicious to us. We had grown used to it, and the sharp marasquin of the country did not seem so terrible as in the beginning.

The prince drank it until he fell into a torpor much resembling sleep. Impéria took her lace ; Régine, perceiving cards, challenged Moranbois to a game of *besigue* ; Bellamare in-

vited Léon to play chess; Lambesq took up a number of the *Siècle*, dated three weeks back; and Marco went to sleep, as he always did, when he could not laugh and frolic. The evening threatened to be too peaceful for us, when the prince, sitting up again on his divan, began to recite verses from Racine, pretending to have forgotten them, that he might urge us to declaim them before him.

"This is making us pay our score rather quickly," whispered Bellamare to me; "but as well pay promptly as to run in debt. Let us set about it gayly."

The prince requested a scene from *Phèdre*. This was Lucinde's rôle, but she had been attacked, upon the rock, with a loss of voice, from which she had not wholly recovered, and she was too proud of her fine organ to consent to injure it; she urged Impéria to take her place.

"I have played only Aricie," replied Impéria. "*Phèdre* is neither within my abilities nor my studies."

"That is no matter," said Bellamare, "you know the part, and, besides, Moranbois is here."

Moranbois had a prodigious memory, and knew by heart all the classic repertory. He concealed himself behind a screen. Impéria and Régine draped themselves in large cashmere shawls that the prince offered them, and placing themselves at a suitable distance, the lights properly arranged, and the royal arm-chair established in state, that is to say, disposed to his liking, they began the scene:—

"Ah! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts!"

I was curious to see how Impéria,

whose voice was rather crystalline than tragic, would recite these contralto verses, and how her acting, so delicate and careful, would adapt itself to the gloomy attitude of the woman devoured by love. She had laughed beforehand at the *fiasco* she was about to make, and had begged us to applaud her just the same, that the prince, who knew little about it, should not perceive her inadequacy.

What was the surprise, not only of myself, but of Bellamare and all the others, when we saw Impéria suddenly change countenance, and, as if inspired by the idea of her rôle, assume, without ever having studied it, the absorbed and hopeless attitude of the great victim of destiny! Her eye grew fixed and hollow, as if she were still watching, from the accursed rock, the deceitful sails that faded out on the horizon. All that we had suffered came back to us, and a shudder passed through our veins. She felt it vibrate around her, and her face assumed an expression that we did not recognize as hers. Her irreproachable diction gradually accented itself, her cold breast heaved, and her weak voice, grown strident, gained accents of distress, rebellion, and suffocation, which resembled nothing we had hitherto known. Was she feverish? were we delirious? She made us shed genuine tears; and this emotion, doubtless necessary to people who strove to laugh, even amid the terrors of death, wrought us up to an insane excitement. We applauded, we cried, we threw ourselves into each other's arms, we kissed Impéria's hands, and told her that she was sublime. We made more noise

than an entire house. The prince was forgotten as if he had never existed.

When I remembered him, I saw that he was looking at us with astonishment; doubtless he took us for fools, but it was still a play. He thought to study the familiar life of actors, concerning whom people in the outside world are profoundly curious, and which he could observe only at some quite exceptional moment.

The thing interested him. All that we owed him was not to weary him. So all was for the best. He had no need to ask us for another scene; we all felt a furious desire to play the tragedy, and to feel ourselves inspired each by the other. Moranbois, the Hercules, brought the box of costumes. The prince's boudoir served as dressing-room for the men, his study for the women. He remarked a little stupidly upon the modesty of our apparel; and Moranbois, who could not long constrain himself, said to him, in the most courtly tone he could command, "Then your Highness had entertained the belief that we were vulgar people!"

The prince condescended to laugh heartily at this sally.

In quarter of an hour we had taken off our swaddling-clothes, and put on our draperies. I played Hypolite; Lambesq played Thésée; Anna, Aricie; Léon, Théràmène. We acted the whole play, I know not how. We were caught up and lifted above the earth by the talent that Impéria had revealed. It seemed that the shipwreck had changed her artistic temperament; she was ner-

vous, feverish, sometimes admirable, always harrowing. She yielded to the sway of her inspiration; she had no consciousness of what she did. She was seized occasionally with a wish to laugh, which terminated in sobs. This need of laughter began to appeal to our nervous systems also; it was the inevitable reaction after our tears. When Léon came to Théràmène's recital, of which he had a horror, he pretended that he had forgotten it, and Marco, warned by him, pushed Purpurin, attired in the most overpowering costume, in front of Thésée. Purpurin made no supplication. Delighted to exhibit his dramatic talent, he began thus, mingling his two favorite tirades:—

*"A peine nous sortions des portes de Trézène.
C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit,
Ma mère Jézabel. . . Ses gardes affligés. . ."*

He could say no more. The prince rolled over with laughter upon the cushions, and this was the signal for an exuberant hilarity on our part.

While we were taking off our costumes, Bellamare also enjoyed a comedy, and it was the prince who supplied him with it.

"Monsieur Impresario," said this naïve potentate to him, "you have kept a secret from me, I know not why. But at last I discover it, and you will confess the truth. This young actress that you call Impéria, it is an assumed name?"

"All our names are assumed," replied Bellamare, "and this one conceals no mystery worthy to interest your Highness."

"Pardon me. I perfectly recognized Mademoiselle Rachel."

"Who?" cried Bellamare, beside himself with surprise. "Which one?"

"Impéria, I tell you. I have seen Rachel once in this very rôle. It is her height, her age, her voice, her acting. Come, confess it; do not mystify me any longer. It is certainly Rachel, who, to punish me for not having at once recognized her, has forbidden you to betray her incognito."

Bellamare was too honest to lie, and, at the same time, too mischievous to forego the diversion that the prince's singular error promised us. He declared that Impéria was not Rachel, but he declared it with a hesitating accent and an embarrassed air which persuaded our host that he had not been deceived.

When Impéria returned to the saloon, Klémenti kissed her hands respectfully and tenderly, entreating her to keep the cashmere shawl that she brought back to him. She refused it, saying that she had not enough ability and reputation to accept such a gift. Lucinde, who followed her, thought her very foolish, and greatly regretted not having acted Phèdre. Régine said, in an undertone: "Take it; you can give it to me, if you do not care for it."

The prince seemed hurt by the refusal. Bellamare took the shawl, and told the prince that it should be accepted, but dexterously replaced it in His Highness's apartment, rightly thinking that he ought not to make capital of the name of Rachel, and that the present would be acceptable only when it should be offered to Impéria, appreciated for herself.

When we had returned to our

own rooms, he regaled us with the anecdote, adding, at the same time, that Impéria had revealed abilities, that evening, which rendered our host's mistake excusable.

"Hush, my friend," replied Impéria, with sudden sadness. "What I have been this evening I appreciate better than you. I indulged in an experiment. I played from impulse, thinking to be detestable, and promising myself to exaggerate still further, if I made you laugh. I made you weep, because you needed to weep; but you will laugh to-morrow, if I repeat it."

"No," said Bellamare, "I am a judge of that; what you chanced upon this evening was truly fine, I give you my word of honor."

"Ah well, if that is true," she replied, "I shall not recover it to-morrow, since I did it unintentionally."

"We shall see!" said Lucinde, who had suffered herself to be led away, like the others, into applauding her companion, but who had had enough of it already, and did not fancy being superseded.

"Let us see directly," replied Bellamare, with the enthusiasm that he was wont to exhibit in his teaching. "I am going to see for myself if it is a fugitive inspiration, such as so many distinguished artists have had at some time in their lives, and which could never be recaptured. Begin again for me here!"

'Ah que ne suis-je assise —'

"I am tired," answered Impéria, "it is impossible."

"Tired? an additional reason. Come! try, I wish it; it is for your own sake, my child! try to engrave

your inspiration upon the marble, before it has grown cold again. If you regain it, I will note it carefully, and preserve it for you afterwards, so that you shall not lose it again."

Impéria seated herself, endeavored to compose her attitude and face. She recovered neither her expression nor her accent.

"You see plainly," said she, "it was the passing of a breath. Perhaps, even, it was not in me at all. You had the collective hallucination which results from excited imaginations."

"Then it will be like my case," I said to her. "I had the sacred fire on a certain evening, and afterwards —"

"The thing happens to everybody," replied Bellamare. "I remember having played Arnolphe, all one evening, without speaking through my nose. I had quarrelled with my wife that morning, and I was radiant as the stars. Hence, because one falls back into his natural condition, after these prodigies, it does not follow that he can never reproduce and fix them. Never be discouraged, children. Apollo is great, and Bellamare is his prophet!"

The next day Bellamare was summoned by the prince into his study.

"It is necessary," he said to him, "that you perform a courageous act, since you are still somewhat fatigued. I had hoped to allow you some days of rest; but the situation is pressing, and, besides, the presence of Rachel among you — Do not deny; my groom has been talking this morning with your young comedian, who confessed all to him; it is truly Rachel who

disguises herself under the name of Impéria. I could not be mistaken in her! I have still the voice of Rachel in my ears, her fine profile before my eyes. If she persists in her incognito, do not contradict her; we will pretend to keep her secret; but the influence of her real name and the spell of her wonderful talent will be of great use to my country. Understand me fully; no one is capable of commanding a great insurrection. All these petty chiefs, equally brave and devoted, are equally lacking in the requisites, — money and intelligence. I am rich myself, and I have received the education that develops a savage into a man. So the general safety is in my hands, if they will but open their eyes. There is a prejudice against me, on account of this very education. They think me a buffoon, because I love the arts. Assist me to win and captivate these uncultured minds. Declaim fine verses to them, of which I will give them a translation of my own making, and whose harmonious solemnity shall strike them with respect. Show them impressive costumes, sing them martial airs. I know that you are all musicians, and lastly, lastly, if Rachel would, if Rachel, appearing again in the style of a few years back, would consent to sing them this *Marseillaise*, which has, they say, stirred up the French people — Come! I know that she does not wish to sing it any more; but here, under a transparent *pseudonyme* — Impéria! *impératrice*: it is so evident! I know well that this song fatigues her greatly; but I have gems to recompense her, and finer cashmeres than the one

that she refused yesterday. As for **you**, Monsieur Impresario, you shall **make** your own terms, you have not **told** me your conditions yet; the **time** has come. Seat yourself at my **desk**. Write, and I will sign."

Any one but Bellamare, unless a **rascal**, would have been embarrassed **in** accepting; but he knew how to **combine** the honorable man and the **man** of humor, so he took his resolution on the instant, and wrote as follows: "Prince Klémenti engages for a month the troupe of M. Bellamare, at a thousand francs for each performance that they shall give in the castle of His Highness, with the assistance of Mademoiselle Impéria. There shall be further allowed to the said Mademoiselle Impéria the sum of one thousand francs per representation, if, at the end of the said engagement, Prince Klémenti persists in seeing in her the equal of Mademoiselle Rachel, in the song of the *Marseillaise* and in tragedy; failing which, there shall be due to the said Impéria only a present, at the option of the said prince."

The prince thought the document ingenious, signed it, and gave a thousand francs in advance. Bellamare, on withdrawing, said to him, to ease his conscience: "I assure Your Highness that Impéria is not Rachel."

"Precisely! Precisely!" cried the prince, laughing. "Call your company, and select your theatre. As for me, I am going to issue my invitations for next Sunday."

He summoned Meta, who, having been in his service for three years, had learned the language of the

country, and ordered him to serve as interpreter between the company and the workmen that they would have to employ. From that moment Meta, who had taken a violent fancy to us, only left us to dress and shave the prince.

He was a knowing lad, bold and spoiled, a thorough Paris *gamin*, who boasted of having played his part on many a barricade. He had seen Rachel at the free performances, and although he was certain that she was not among us, he had maliciously confirmed the belief of his master, over whom he had the ascendancy usually allowed to spoiled children. So he was the principal author of the romance on whose adventures we were about to enter.

Léon greatly blamed the *mezzo termine* of Bellamare, and declared that we were taking a Jesuitical advantage of Rachel's name. Impéria felt considerable unwillingness to be the object of this fraud on the part of the prince toward his invited guests; but the prince displayed a good faith so obstinate or so well simulated, all our efforts to undeceive him were in vain, that our scruples vanished, and we prepared gayly to play Camille and Racine in the convent-bishop's-palace fortress of Saint Clement.

We could not find a better place than the funereal library. It would contain an audience of four hundred persons,—the maximum specified by the prince,—besides a pretty little stage, with its greenroom, dressing-room, and side-scenes. The solid shelves, which had formerly supported folio manuscripts and volumes printed in every language, were ta-

ken down, and rearranged to form a very fine estrade for the spectators. We had workmen in abundance, very active and obedient. They were soldiers of the prince's army. Two monks were brought from the new convent, who, thinking to decorate a chapel, painted for us, in distemper, a very pretty front in the Greco-Byzantine style, and the *harlequin's cloaks*, that is to say, the first stationary side-scenes, which serve as a set-off to the others. An immense carpet performed the office of curtain; it was a little heavy; it took four men to manage it. That did not trouble us. Moranbois undertook the making of the scenery, which he understood better than any one. Léon designed it; I painted it, with the aid of Bellamare and Marco. The back curtain, with a classic peristyle for tragedy, had already been repaired at Gravosa. Lambesq repaired the instruments that had been injured, to the best of his ability. The orchestra, in other words the four of us who supplied their place, were concealed behind the side-scenes, that the actors engaged in the performance might take their part from time to time, without being seen to play the violin or the bass-viol, in the costume of emperor or confidant. Bellamare had introduced an innovation; instead of chorus, at the beginning or end of the acts, a corypheus recited a piece of poetry. These verses, imitated from ancient texts, were very fine; they were by Léon. The orchestra accompanied them noiselessly, with a grave and monotonous rhythm that I had composed, or rather pillaged,

but which produced a very good effect.

While we were thus despatching matters, Impéria studied the *Marseillaise*, which she had never sung in her life, and which she had never heard sung by Rachel; she knew only that, without voice and without musical method, the great *tragédienne* had composed a sort of dramatic melopœia, which was rather mimed and declaimed than sung. Impéria, a musician, could not make so much of the musical theme, and did not hope to attain the sculpturesque beauty, the muffled and terrible accent, of her who had been styled the "Muse of Liberty." Her pure voice had no difficulty in singing, but it was too soft to "arm battalions." She resolved to express herself, according to her nature, whose foundation was calm, resolute, and tenacious. She appealed to her proud and stoical will; she was very simple; she sang quite erect, she looked her audience in the face, with a fascinating fixedness; she advanced upon them, extending her arms, as if she were marching to her death, amid a shower of bullets, with a scornful indifference. This interpretation was a masterpiece of understanding. The first time that she essayed it before us, the first strophe astonished us, the second began to agitate us, the third carried us away. It was not an appeal to enthusiasm; it was like a defiance, so much the more exciting that it was cold and haughty.

"That is it!" said Moranbois, who, you recollect, was the infallible judge of the *effect*, and consequently of the result. "It is not the *Marseillaise*

shouted to the people, nor draped for the artists; it is the *Marseillaise* spit in the face of cowards."

We saw the prince only at dinner, during all these preparations. He had much to do, on his part, to invite and reassemble his audience, whose principal members were separated from him by mountains and precipices. All these chiefs of clans were not difficult to lodge. A common hall, rugs, and cushions, they demanded nothing more. They brought all their baggage in their belts, arms, pipes, and tobacco. Not allowing their women to go abroad with them and share their amusements, they greatly simplified the cares of hospitality. This audience without women damped us at first, but it excited Impéria's enthusiasm for the *Marseillaise*.

Lucinde had resumed the part of Phèdre, and, with the exception of the prince and the groom, all the audience seriously took her for the celebrated Rachel. Impéria recited the passages of the corypheus admirably, but they paid no great attention to it. When she appeared at the end, in short tunic, red mantle, and Phrygian cap, bearing a standard with the colors of the local insurrection, they were delighted, and the *Marseillaise* produced the same effect that it had done on us. They listened in silence, then arose a murmur like the first breath of a storm, then a sort of fury broke forth in cries and stamps and threats. A flash passed through the hall, it was the gleam of all the yataghans drawn from their belts and brandished overhead. All these tall, imposing figures, who, since the open-

ing of the play, had regarded us with a majestic and coldly kind attention, became terrible. Their mustaches bristled, their eyes flashed fire, their clenched hands menaced heaven! Impéria was frightened. This audience of desert-lions, who seemed to wish to rush upon her, roaring and showing their claws, made her nearly flee into the greenroom; but Moranbois called to her, with his harsh voice, in the midst of the tumult, "Hold your effect, hold it! always! always!"

She did what she had believed herself incapable of doing: she came forward to the very footlights, braving the spectators, and preserving her dauntless mien, rendered more effective by the delicacy of her figure and her childish face. Then there was a transport of sympathy throughout the hall; all these heroes of the *Iliad*, as Bellamare called them, kissed their hands to her in their simple way, and threw her their scarfs of silk and gold, their chains of gold and silver, even to the rich clasps on their caps: it took an hour to gather them all up.

The prince had disappeared during this uproar. Where was he? Very open with us, but very wily with his countrymen, he had received his guests in French costume, delighting to irritate them by this affectation, and wishing to force them to accept him as a half-breed who was worth all their pure descent. In the interval that the long and noisy triumph of Impéria afforded him he had hastily assumed his most magnificent state costume, and had replaced his fine parade mustache,

which was at all times artificial, his own being naturally slight. He thus appeared upon the stage, and presented the pretended Rachel with an enormous bouquet of mountain anemones and myrtle-blossoms, whose stems were fastened with a bracelet of diamonds.

He accompanied this offering with a speech, in the language of the country, which he uttered with his face turned toward the audience, and which expressed the ardent patriotism and the implacable national *vendetta* that the genius of the actress had made to vibrate and quiver through these heroic souls. Then, seeing that his hearers hesitated to accept these facile transformations of his person, the prince added some words, touching his jacket and his beard, and striking his hand upon his heart. That was easy to understand. He told them that the worth of a man was not in a dress that he could procure for money, nor in a mustache that the barber could replace as well as take away, but that it was in a valiant heart that God alone could put within his breast. He accented this last touch so well, and his gesture was so energetic, that he forced his effect like a masterly actor who fires the house. He had certainly studied Lambesq, and spoke quite as well as he in his dialect. We gave the signal for applause, behind the curtain, and the excited audience gave him the ovation that he had designed.

Impéria, returned to the green-room, fainted from fatigue or emotion. On regaining her consciousness, she saw at her feet the heap of offerings

that had been thrown to her. She made Moranbois take them away, as belonging to the association, and, in spite of anything that we could say, we had to put them in the common fund. She kept only two handsome scarfs, which she gave to Lucinde and Régine, who were only *pensionnaires*. Bellamare insisted, however, that she should retain the diamond bracelet, in order to wear it before the prince, who did not understand refusals, and attributed them only to a scorn for the value of the proffered article.

We played the tragedy, like this, four times in one month, before an audience each time more numerous, and still the *Marseillaise* excited the same enthusiasm and made a shower of gifts rain down upon the stage. It was like our experience at Toulon, only the presents were more costly; and, as the prince persisted in wishing to persuade the others and himself that no one but Rachel was capable of singing the *Marseillaise* as Impéria sang it, we saw ourselves in possession of a fine sum, and of a property convertible into cash, such as ancient jewels and brocaded tissues, knives, pipes, and other rich and curious objects. Impéria was very seriously offended when we sought to separate her interests from ours. She insisted that the association compact should be executed to the letter. She profited by her donations, only to give some handsome present to the *pensionnaires*. Lambesq was not passed over, in spite of his misconduct. He had roared verses with cyclopean vibrations that had produced more effect than the

correct and studied acting of Léon. So he had contributed to our success, and we owed him some reward. He had not expected it, and showed himself very grateful.

Success is life to an actor: it is security for the present, it is boundless hope, it is confidence in the lucky star. We were united as brothers and sisters; no more jealousy, no more pique, no more ill-humor; a perfect kindness towards each other, an inexhaustible gayety, a health of iron. We had that wonderful exuberance of vitality, and that childish improvidence, that characterize the profession when all goes well. We pursued our studies ardently, we introduced improvements in our *mise-en-scène*. Bellamare, having no outside cares, devoted all his time to us, and caused us to make real progress. Léon was no longer gloomy. The pleasure of hearing his poetry well spoken by Impéria restored him to a mood for inspiration. We led a charming life in our oasis. The weather was superb, and allowed us frequent strolls through a country interspersed with splendid horrors and hidden wonders. We did not perceive the shadow of a brigand. It is true that when we ventured out a little in the mountains, the prince furnished us with an escort; at such times we went on hunting expeditions, and the women rejoined us with provisions, for luncheon, in the wildest spots. We had a passion for exploring, and no one suffered any longer from low spirits.

The inhabitants of the valley had conceived a friendship for us, and offered us a touching hospitality.

They were the most honest, the gentlest people in the world. In the evening, when we went back to the fortress, it seemed as if we were returning home, and the grating of the drawbridge behind us produced no disagreeable impression on us. We prolonged our studies, literary dissertations, merry quips, laughter, and jests, very far into the night. We were never exhausted, never weary.

The prince was often absent, and always unexpectedly. Was he preparing for a bold stroke, or was he stirring up his party, to obtain the chief command? Meta, who chattered more concerning his affairs than we inquired, pretended that there were great intrigues for and against his master, that there was a most formidable competitor named Danilo Niégosh, who had more chance of success in the province of Montegro, where Klémenti would certainly fail, despite his efforts, his outlays, his entertainments, and his theatre.

"There is only one thing," said he, "that could make him succeed; it would be to take from the Turks, with only his own troops, some important fortification. These gentlemen, when they act all together, perform equal feats; so the ambitious ones naturally wish to do some brilliant deed, without warning anybody, or to succeed with their little band in an enterprise that the others would have considered impossible. In that way they sometimes do astonishing things; but so it is, also, that they very often overdo it, are attacked and outnumbered, and so there is no end to it."

The groom was, perhaps, right; still, we could not help admiring these handsome chiefs, barbarous in manners and customs, but proud and indomitable, who chose rather to live like savages in their mountain fastnesses than to abandon them to the enemy and abide in civilized countries. We felt more respect and sympathy for them than for our prince, and it seemed to us that the other leaders had no reason to envy him his literature and his borrowed beard. We thought ourselves absurd to wish to infuse into them a civilization of which they had no need, and which had only served to make the prince less poetical by half.

Perhaps you will think us in the wrong, and that we reasoned too much like artists; it may be. The artist is charmed with the local atmosphere, and does not heed the obstacles that it presents to progress. I have told you that he does not go to the bottom of ideas; he is full of fancies, he is made up of imagination and sentiment.

We did not argue with the prince. It would have been very useless, and he gave us no opportunity. When he came to our rehearsals, or when he took us into his Byzantine saloon, he squeezed us like lemons to express our wit and gayety for his entertainment. Had he a real desire to amuse himself and forget his petty fever of ambition with us, or did he exert himself to play the part of a frivolous man with us, to lull the suspicions of certain rivals?

Whatever might have been his intention, he was perfectly social and agreeable, and we could not refuse

to be social with him. He certainly made us pay our bill at his table, and earn the money of our compact, for he very often asked a performance *gratis*, for himself alone, and he was convulsed with laughter before the excellent comedy of Bellamare and the easy burlesque of Marco; but he showed himself neither distrustful nor penurious, and we did not wish to be in arrears with him. If he had not always an excellent style, he had, at least, the wit to overwhelm our actresses with consideration and attentions, without making love to any of them. As Anna continued to have a strong infatuation for him, we had feared a little awkwardness in this connection. We did not play the pedagogue with these ladies, but we detested people who came to bill and coo before the actors' faces, and thereby force them to play the jealous or the complaisant rôle, even when they may be neither the one nor the other. In the provinces and in a small company, the situation is sometimes insupportable, and we were no more ready to submit to it in an Oriental palace than in the greenroom of Quimper Corentin. Anna had received fair warning that, if the prince threw her the handkerchief, we would be neither confidants nor witnesses.

The prince was shrewder than to conceal his love-affairs. He abstained from all gallantry. He desired that we should be well, and in full possession of our abilities; he did not wish to make trouble among us, and we were grateful to him for it. We owed him a month of un-

clouded happiness. I need to recall it, that I may speak of him with justice to you. How little we foresaw by what a horrible tragedy we should pay for his splendid hospitality!

I must, however, arrive at that distracting event, that atrocious scene, whose memory always covers me with a cold perspiration to the very roots of my hair.

We had fulfilled our engagement. We had played *Phèdre*, *Athalie*, *Polyeucte*, and *Cinna*. The prince had kept his promises, and made us rich. When arranging with us, he showed us a letter from Constantinople, in which he was informed that Zamorine had gone to Russia. This rascally adventurer had given us the slip; we were under no obligations to him. He left us to pay the expenses of our recent voyage, but we were too well recompensed to complain, and Bellamare was undecided whether to go to Constantinople on our own account, or to return to France by way of Germany. The prince was in favor of the latter plan. Turkey would afford us only deceptions, dangers, and destitution. He urged us to proceed to Belgrade and to Pesth, predicting a great success in Hungary; but he begged us to come to no decision before a short absence which he was obliged to make. Perhaps he would ask another fortnight of us, under the same conditions. We promised to wait for him three days, and he departed, once more urging us to consider his house as our own. He had never shown himself more friendly. He persisted so resolutely in taking Impéria for

Rachel, that he said to her on bidding her adieu: "I hope that you will not carry away an unpleasant impression of my uncivilized country, and that you will say a little good of me to your generals and your ministers."

So we remained very tranquil under the protection of twelve garrison soldiers, who did duty in the house and in the fortress, alternately domestics and soldiers. I have told you they were grave, handsome men, who did not understand a word of French. A sort of lieutenant, named *Nikanor* (I shall never forget it), and who commanded in the absence of the prince, spoke Italian very well, but he never spoke to us. We had nothing to do with him; his duties were wholly military. He was a tall old man, whose sinister glance and thin lip did not please us. We fancied, not without reason, that he had a profound scorn, perhaps a secret aversion, for us.

Our immediate attendance was performed by Friar Ischion and little Meta, and as far as possible we dispensed with their service. The monk was dirty, curious, obsequious, and false. The groom was a chatter-box, familiar, but a stupid rascal, said Moranbois.

It was not, then, without displeasure that we saw our little Marco establish an intimacy with this young fellow, even to the point of thee-ing and thou-ing each other, and separate himself from us more and more to go about the cloisters and the offices with him. Marco replied to our reproofs that his father was a workman of Rouen, as Meta's father was

a Paris workman, that they had spoken the same slang from childhood, that Meta had quite as much wit as he; in short, that they were entirely on a par. He gave as pretext for his eternal marauding with this Frontin, the pleasure of enraging the monk, who was an old pest, and detested both of them. It was easy to see that the monk held them in utter horror, although he never complained of their misdeeds, and appeared to endure them with angelic patience. The incident of the Turks' heads still lingered in his memory. He had found them again, upon the altar of a little oratory where he performed his devotions and jammed his preserves. He had very readily surmised the author of this profanation. I do not know if he had complained of it to the prince. The prince had seemed entirely ignorant, and the heads had never reappeared.

As our table was now as well served as the resources of the country and the culinary skill of Ischion permitted, we had formally forbidden Marco and Meta to steal anything from the pantry; and if they continued this plunder, it was on their own account, and without our knowledge.

One day they came to the rehearsal with faces of extreme confusion, laughing in a singular manner, rather nervous than merry. We did not like to have Meta in our way, during these exercises. He disarranged and handled everything, and did nothing but chatter. Bellamare, annoyed, dismissed him somewhat harshly, and reproved Marco, who had been tardy and rehearsed every-

thing wrong. As this did not often happen to him; and as he was really in fault, we thought we ought to let Bellamare's lesson produce its impression on him, and did not seek to effect an immediate reconciliation between them. After the performance he disappeared. We never forgave ourselves this severity, and Bellamare, so sparing of reprimands and so fatherly with the younger artists, reproached himself for it as for a crime.

We still dined at three o'clock, in the great refectory. Neither Marco nor Meta made their appearance. We thought that they were sulking, like children as they were.

"How foolish they are!" said Bellamare; "I had already forgotten their misdeeds."

Evening came, and the collation was served to us by Ischion in person. We asked him where the two boys were. He replied that he had seen them go out with lines to fish in the lake; that doubtless they had returned too late, and had found the drawbridge raised, but that there was no reason for anxiety about them. Everywhere in the village they would find people ready to afford them hospitality until the next day.

The thing was so probable, we had been so well received every time that we had passed through the village, that we felt no uneasiness. Nevertheless, we were struck by what Lambesq told us, on returning to our room. He asked us if we knew that the prince had a harem.

"Not a harem, exactly," replied Léon; "it is, I believe, what they call an *odalik*. He is not, like the Turks, married to one of his women,

and possessor of the others by acquisition. He has simply several mistresses, who are free to leave him, but who have no desire to do so, because they would be sold to the Turks. They live in perfect harmony, probably because it is the custom among Eastern women, and they keep themselves concealed, because that is the manner of loving, or the point of honor, among the men.

"It is possible," responded Lambesq; "but do you know within what corner of this mysterious mansion they are immured?"

"Immured?" said Bellamare.

"Yes, immured, really immured. All the doors communicating with the portion of the convent that they inhabit have been walled up; it is the former laundry, where there is a very fine cistern. They have converted this laundry into a very luxurious bathing-room; they have planted a little garden in the yard; they have built a very pretty kiosk, and these three ladies live there without ever going out. They have a negress to attend them, and two sentinels to guard the only door of their prison, which is reached by a passage contrived in the thickness of the walls. This precious prince has the modest freedom of the Orientals."

"How do you know these particulars?" asked Bellamare, with surprise. "Have you had the imprudence to prowl around there?"

"No; that would be bad taste," replied Lambesq, and Heaven knows if these ladies are *houris* or frights! In short, I have not been tempted; but that little piece of impudence, the groom, found the key of the

mysterious passage in the prince's apartment, and he has used it several times, in order to see, without being perceived, these ladies at their bath."

"He told you that?"

"No; it is Marco who told me, and even —"

"And even what?"

"I don't know that I ought to tell you; he confided it to me one evening when he was tipsy, and made up with me more than was necessary. I could very well have dispensed with his confidences; but I confess I was curious to see if he was making sport of me, and he gave me details that convinced me. In short, I believe it is well that you should know it; Meta has taken him with him to see the toilet of the odalisques, and it has turned his head. I wager that he was there yesterday, when we waited for him, at rehearsal, and perhaps the thing is not without danger for him. I know not how the prince's *icoglans* would take the pleasantry, if they detected him in his curiosity."

"Bah! we are not among the Turks," replied Bellamare, "they would not impale him for it; but the prince would be extremely displeased, I suppose, and I shall severely oppose these escapades. Marco is a good and worthy lad, when he understands that these little follies would tarnish our honor, he will renounce them. You have done well, Lambesq, to tell me the truth, and I regret that you did not tell me sooner."

We went to bed tranquilly, but some vague presentiment disturbed

my sleep, and I awoke before day-break. I thought of Marco, in spite of myself; I could have wished that he had returned.

It had thundered in the night, and the apartments were oppressive with a dull heat. Feeling affected by it, I did not wish to awake my companions; I passed out noiselessly upon the terrace that overlooked a neighboring bastion, and whence could be seen, a little farther off, the entrance tower, outlining itself against a sky covered with clouds. The greenish morning light brought out the irregular forms of this thick, moveless vapor. The fortress, thus viewed, looked like a pile of black masses, solemnly gloomy.

There were, it seemed to me, some persons on the tower, but they did not stir. I thought it was a group of storks asleep upon the battlements. Day advanced, however, and soon it was impossible for me not to recognize the Turks' heads, replaced triumphantly upon their iron rods. It was doubtless an infringement upon the orders of the absent prince, for it could not be his intention to offer this challenge to the nervous susceptibility of our actresses; but it was a defiance from his people, perhaps a menace addressed to us. I went and cautiously awakened Bellamare, to acquaint him with this circumstance. While he was dressing to go out with me, in order to satisfy himself of it, the last vestiges of night had fled, and we distinctly saw, between two battlements that faced us, Marco and Meta, who were looking at us.

"Then they have made them pris-

oners," said Bellamare to me, "and have forced them to pass the night in company with those cut-off heads, to punish them —"

The words died upon his lips; each instant increased the intensity of the morning sunshine. The two youths were motionless, as if they had been tightly chained, their chins leaned on the border of the platform. They had a livid pallor; a frightful grin contracted their half-open mouths; they regarded us with a fixed gaze. Our gestures and our calls produced no impression on them; some drops of blood oozed over the stone —

"They are dead!" cried Bellamare, clasping me in his trembling hands. "They have executed them. Those are only their heads!"

I almost fainted, and, for some moments, I knew not where I was. Bellamare, also, fell back and staggered like a drunken man. At last he summoned up his self-command.

"We must know," he said; "we must chastise — Come!"

We aroused our comrades.

"Listen," Bellamare said to them, "there is something atrocious, an infamous murder — Marco and Meta! — Hush! not a word, not a cry — Think of our poor women who have already suffered so much!"

He went to fasten their door on the outside, and gave the key to Léon, saying: "You are not strong, you could not aid us. I confide the women to you; if they come to trouble them, strike on our tam-tam, we shall hear you, we do not leave the house. Say nothing to them, if they do not wake before the accustomed hour,

and if they do not try to go out. From their chamber they cannot see this horrible thing. Come, Moranbois! come, Lawrence! You two are equal to ten men in point of muscle; I, too, am 'strong when it is necessary. And you, Lambesq, listen! you are very muscular also; but you did not love Marco. Are you generous enough, good comrade enough, to be willing to avenge him, even at the risk of your own life?"

"You doubt it?" answered Lambesq, with an accent of courage and sincerity that he had never had upon the stage.

"It is well!" responded Bellamare, pressing his hands with energy. "Let us take weapons, daggers especially; we have plenty of them here."

Moranbois opened the box, and in the twinkling of an eye we were equipped. We repaired to the entrance-tower. It was unguarded; no one seemed to have risen in that part of the fortress; the bridge was not yet lowered. The sentinel, who watched the neighboring bastion, alone regarded us with an indifferent glance, and did not interrupt his monotonous paces for a moment. His orders had not foreseen our design.

First of all we wished to assure ourselves of the truth, evident as it was. We ascended the winding staircase of the tower, and found there only the bloody heads of the two unhappy boys. They had been severed at a blow, by the Damascus blades that the Orientals use so cruelly well; their bodies were not there.

"Let us leave the heads where they are," said Bellamare to Moran-

bois, whose teeth chattered with grief and anger. "The prince returns to-day; it is necessary that he should see them."

"Ah well, he shall see them," replied Moranbois; "but I will not have these innocents remain in the company of this Turkish carrion."

And, as if he had needed to vent his wrath, he tore the dried heads from their supports, and flung them on the paved floor of the court-yard, where their skulls broke with a sharp crash.

"That is useless!" Bellamare said to him.

But he could not prevent him, and we left the tower, after covering those two unhappy faces with our handkerchiefs, as we would not leave them to form a spectacle for the derision of their executioners. We took the key of the tower, and, as we were leaving it, we saw that, although the sun had risen, the bridge was still drawn up, contrary to custom; they had made us prisoners.

"It is all one to us," said Moranbois; "it is not outside that we have business."

There were two guards stationed under the portcullis. Bellamare questioned them. Their orders forbade them to reply; they had the air of not hearing. At this moment the Friar Ischion appeared on the other side of the moat. He carried a basket filled with eggs, which he was bringing from the village. Then he had been up early enough to know what had occurred during the evening or the night. Bellamare waited until he had been admitted, and, as Moranbois shook him roughly

in order to make him speak more quickly, we had to defend him ; he was the only one who could understand and answer us.

"Who has assassinated our comrade and the prince's groom?" said Bellamare to the terror-stricken monk. "You know it; come, do not affect surprise."

"In the name of the great Saint George," replied the monk, "do not break my eggs, Excellency! They are all fresh; it is for your breakfast."

"I will crush you like a viper," said Moranbois, "if you pretend not to hear. Is it you who have murdered these children? No, you would not have had the courage; but it is you who have spied upon them, accused them, delivered them up. I am sure of it, and I give you my word that you shall not carry your foul head into paradise."

The monk fell upon his knees, swearing by all the saints of the Greek calendar that he knew nothing, and that he was innocent of any evil intention. He evidently lied; but the two guards, who had been tranquilly looking on, began to grow somewhat excited, and Bellamare did not wish that they should interfere, before we had obtained an answer from the monk. He made him declare that the only authority who could be responsible for an execution in the fortress was the commandant, Nikanor.

"And what other would have power over the people?" replied the monk. "In the absence of the prince, there must be a master here, of course; the commandant has right

of life and death over all the inhabitants of the fortress and the village."

"Over you, dogs of slaves, it may be," said Moranbois; "but over us, that is what we will see! Where is he burrowed, your beast of a commandant? Show us to his kennel, and do not argue!"

The monk obeyed, bewailing, meanwhile, his eggs, broken by the rough movements of Moranbois, and laughing in his sleeve at our indignation. He led us to the tiger's den; no doubt he hoped we should not leave it.

II.

At the end of the second court, in an arched hall, low and sombre, we found the commandant couched upon a mat, and smoking his long *chibouque* with peaceful majesty. He was not guarded in the least. Considering us vile mountebanks, it had not entered his mind that we could call him to account.

"Is it you who have assassinated our companion?" Bellamare said to him in Italian.

"I have never assassinated any one," replied the old man, with an imposing calmness which staggered us for an instant. And, without quitting his careless attitude, he drew a whiff from his pipe, and looked another way.

"Do not play upon words," replied Bellamare. "It is by your order that they have butchered the two boys?"

"Yes," answered Nikanor, with the same coolness, "it is by my order. If you are not satisfied, appeal to the

prince, and if he blame me, I shall have deserved it; but I have no account to render to any one but him. Be prudent, and leave me in peace."

"We are not here to respect your repose," replied Bellamare. "We question you; you must answer, whether you like it or not. Why have you condemned these unfortunates?"

Nikanor hesitated a moment, then, emphasizing the pretentious slowness with which he spoke Italian, he answered: "It is for a personal offence against the prince."

"What offence?"

"The prince alone will know it."

"We wish to know it, and we will know it!" cried Moranbois with his hoarse voice, which became terrible.

And in the twinkling of an eye, seizing Nikanor by the beard, he had thrown him, face downward, on the floor, and set his knee upon his neck.

The old man thought that his hour was come; he had not deigned to think of defending himself; he said to himself, doubtless, that it was too late, and that he was about to endure the pain of retaliation; he remained silent, and gave no sign of hope or fear.

"I forbid you to kill him," said Bellamare to Moranbois, who was literally beside himself. "I wish him to confess."

He made a sign to us; we closed the gate behind us, thrusting the heavy staple into a very primitive fastening. The monk had followed us, through curiosity or to summon assistance, if it should be necessary.

Lambesq, catching sight of the cords and gags that were always there, bound and gagged him quickly. We had deprived the commandant of his weapons; and as there was a sort of rack there containing a half-dozen long garrison muskets, we were in condition to sustain a siege.

"Now," said Bellamare, who had raised Nikanor again, and was holding a pistol to his throat, "you will speak!"

"Never," responded the inflexible mountaineer, without varying his cold and haughty accent.

"I will kill you!" said Moranbois to him.

"Kill," replied he; "I am ready."

What could we do? We were disarmed by this stoical indifference to life. Besides, the vengeance was too easy.

"You will at least tell us," said Moranbois, "the name of the executioner?"

"There was no executioner. I myself have slain the culprits, with the sabre that you hold. If you use it against me, you will commit a crime. As for me, I have done my duty."

"I will not kill you," replied Moranbois, "but I would like to beat you like a dog, and I will beat you. Put yourself on the defensive, you are the strongest man in the country. I have seen you in the exercises of the drill. Come, defend yourself. I mean to knock you down, and spit in your face. Only, not a cry, not a signal to your men, or I will blow your brains out for a coward."

Nikanor accepted the challenge with a scornful smile. Moranbois

seized him by the waist; they remained, for a moment, locked in each other's grasp, and as if petrified in the tension of their muscles; but, at the end of this brief instant, Nikanor was once more under the feet of the Hercules, who spat in his face, and cut off his mustache with the Damascus sabre which had severed the head of Marco.

We stood by, motionless, and watched this chastisement. The blood of our comrade came between us and any sentiment of pity; but we could not kill a disarmed enemy, and we were prepared to prevent Moranbois from becoming intoxicated with his own anger. Suddenly we were enveloped in a cloud of smoke, and musket-balls, fired from the window of the ground-floor, whistled about us. By some miracle they hit only the unhappy monk, who had an arm broken. Before the soldiers who came to the aid of their leader could repeat the attack, we had thrust before the long and narrow window the long and narrow divan of the captain. We were besieged, and we were delighted to have something to do. They battered the door, but it resisted. The lifeless commandant moved no longer; the monk writhed in vain. You may well believe that none of us thought of him. We cautiously made an opening between the divan and the window, and we discharged a volley that scattered the enemy; but they returned; we had to close up afresh and repeat our fire. I believe that they had a man wounded. They judged that we were impregnable on that side, and reunited all their efforts against the door,

which yielded, but which Moranbois held in such a manner as to allow passage to only one man at a time. Bellamare seized the first that presented himself; he grasped him by the neck and threw him down; the others, rushing precipitately in, almost suffocated him by walking over his body. I caught the second. It was easy for us to seize the barrel of their guns as soon as they appeared, to divert their aim and lay hold of the man. This hand-to-hand struggle was totally unlooked for by them. They did not think us capable of thus resisting. They had not formed the least idea of the force of that spontaneous spring which makes the Frenchman invincible at a given moment. They were nine against our four, but we had the advantage in position. Now they were ten, now twelve; they were all there, but three or four were disabled, and the others recoiled. They took us for demons.

They returned; they thought that we had killed their leader; they meant to avenge him, though they perished one by one. Truly, they were brave, and, while felling them, we could not make up our minds to kill them. We might have done it. They were hardly in our grasp before their faces expressed, not fear, but stupor, a certain superstitious horror; succeeded quite as suddenly by the resignation of fatalism to a death that they believed inevitable. We left them stretched upon the ground, and they lay perfectly still, fearing lest they might seem to ask for quarter.

I know not how long this mad struggle lasted. None of us felt conscious of it. As far as I could gather,

from some words of their language that I had learned, they said that we were sorcerers, and spoke of bringing straw to smoke us out; but they had not time. An exclamation from without and the sound of a well-known voice stopped the combat and ended the siege. The prince had arrived. He imposed silence on them, made them throw down their arms, and advanced toward us, crying, "It is I! What is the matter? Explain yourselves!"

We were too much out of breath to answer. Streaming with sweat, black with powder, our eyes starting from our heads, we were all stammering.

Bellamare, who had fought like a lion, was the first to recover himself, and, imposing silence on Moranbois, who wished to speak, he led the prince to the commandant, who had regained consciousness, as if the unexpected apparition of his master had called him back to life and to his orders.

"Monseigneur," said Bellamare, "with his own hand this man has cut off the heads of our comrade Marco and your servant Meta, two Frenchmen, two boys, for a fault, perhaps a frolic, that he would not tell us, and that he has sworn to tell to no one but yourself. We were mad, we were drunk, we were enraged, and still only one of us challenged him, knocked him down, and cut off his mustache, — spitting in his face, I must and will tell you all; if he is not satisfied, we are ready to fight a duel with him, all of us, one after another. That is all the revenge that we have taken on him; and, if

you do not think it mild, you ask too much of Frenchmen who have a horror of cowardly ferocity, and who regard the murderer in cold blood as an infamous monster. Your soldiers came to the assistance of their chief; I do not say that they were wrong. They wounded your cook in the endeavor to kill us. We had no hand in it, he will tell you so himself. We could have killed our prisoners, and we have not even struck them with our weapons, but have fought with fists and arms. If they smart for it, so much the worse for them! You do not find us disposed to repentance, and we will all perish before saying that your customs are humane, and that the acts of severity committed in your name are just. There, I have said."

"And we support you," added Moranbois, drawing down his fur cap over his head.

The prince had listened without manifesting the least surprise, the least emotion. He was in the presence of his escort and of Nikanor, who listened impassible and silent likewise. He was acting his rôle of superior man; but he was pale, and his eye seemed to seek a solution that might satisfy the pride of his barbarians and the exigencies of our civilization.

He remained wrapped for a moment in this silent meditation, before replying; then he gave some rapid orders in the Slavonic language. The monk was removed directly, and a glass of brandy poured out for Nikanor, who could hardly stand, and whom the prince would not permit to sit before him; then everybody

left us, and the prince, addressing the commandant, said to him in Italian with a cold, harsh tone: "Have you killed Meta and Marco? Answer in the language that I use to question you."

"I have killed them," responded Nikanor.

"Why have you done this?"

Nikanor replied in Slavonic.

"I have ordered you," returned the prince, "to answer in Italian."

"Shall I tell this thing before strangers?" replied the mountaineer, with some excitement and almost reddening.

"You will tell it; I wish it."

"Ah well, master, the valet and the actor saw your women at their bath."

"Is this all?" said the prince, coldly.

"It is all."

"And you killed them in your anger, on taking them in the act?"

"No, I was warned that it had continued for several days. I watched for them and seized them in the passage from your apartment, yesterday, at two o'clock in the afternoon. I led them noiselessly to the dungeon, and this night, in presence of your women, I cut off their heads, which are now upon the tower. No other man, except the monk, has known the cause of their death. Your honor has received no stain; I have done what you ordered, what every man ought to do, or command his servant, or expect from his friend."

The prince turned pale. He could no longer conceal from us the similarity of his Christian customs to the manners of the Turks, and he

was deeply mortified. He attempted, however, to justify himself in our eyes.

"Monsieur Bellamare," he said in French, "if you were married, and an impudent libertine came to peep through a door at your wife, when undressed, would you pardon him this outrage?"

"No," said Bellamare. "My first movement would probably be to throw him out of the window, or to precipitate him down stairs headforemost; but I should do it myself, and, if I had to deal with two boys, I should content myself with kicking them out. In any case, had I been even more outraged, I should charge none of my friends to cut off my rival's head in cool blood, and to plant it triumphantly on the roof of my house."

The prince bit his lip, and turned to Nikanor.

"You have never understood your orders," he said to him; "and, like a brute as you are, you have interpreted in the Turkish style the laws and customs of our nation. It is penalty of death for those who penetrate into our gynecœum, and who establish guilty relations with our women; but here the case was different; you surprised no one in my gynecœum, and you have punished, with the extreme rigor of the law, two foreigners, not subject to our authority, and guilty only toward their own honor. Go, put yourself under arrest, until your punishment is decided."

He added in a firm tone, "Justice shall be done."

But I fancied I intercepted a

meaning glance which said to the commandant: "Be easy, you shall be let off with several days' imprisonment."

Whatever it might be, we could demand nothing more, and no satisfaction to our dignity could restore to life our poor little comrade. We only asked of the prince, with a sufficiently cold manner, that his remains should be returned to us, in order that they might be decently interred.

"It is too just," replied he, evidently annoyed and disconcerted by this demand; "but I cannot permit the burial to take place openly; wait until night."

"And why then?" said Moranbois, indignant. "An infamous deed has been committed among you, and you are unwilling that the reparation should be open! It is all the same to us; we need no one to bury our dead; but we desire the body of our poor boy, we desire it at once, and if they conceal it from us we will search everywhere for it; and if they try to hinder us from guarding it against outrages— Ah well, when we are rested, we will begin again to worry your janizaries."

The prince pretended not to hear this harangue, the last word of which, comparing him to a sultan, must have vexed him greatly. He walked up and down the hall of the body-guard, with a preoccupied air.

"Pardon," he said, as if emerging from a profound revery.

And addressing himself to Bellamare, "What do you ask of me?"

"The corpse of our comrade," replied Bellamare. "Your Highness

will dispose of that of your unhappy servant as you think best."

"Poor boy!" said the prince with a deep sigh, real or affected.

And he went out, telling us to wait a moment. He did not return; but, at the end of ten minutes two men belonging to his escort brought us the mutilated body of the unhappy Marco rolled in a mat. Moranbois took it in his arms, and, while he was carrying it away, Lambesq and I went to bring the poor ghastly head from the tower. We bore these sad remains upon our stage; we enveloped them in the white robe that the young actor had worn some days before, when he had played the play of the Levite Zacharie in *Athalie*. We put a garland of leaves upon the head, and burned perfume about him. Moranbois went out to dig a grave for him in the village cemetery, and Bellamare returned to our actresses to inform them of what must be concealed from them no longer. It was still early; we were surprised; we had lived ten years since sunrise.

Léon had been a prey to keen anxiety, until the moment when he had seen the prince return. He had heard musket-shots; but they practised firing so often in the court-yard of the manor, that he had not considered it a certain indication of our danger, and, as he had given his word not to leave the women, he had remained at his post.

He rejoined us with them on this tragic stage with Byzantine façade, which we had converted into a funeral chapel. If you wish to imagine a dramatic scene, performed as they

are never acted for the public, figure to yourself the tableau that my companions of both sexes unconsciously composed. Exhausted with mental and physical fatigue, I threw myself down in a corner on the estrade, and looked at them. The women had all put on mourning. Impéria, upright, deposited a pious kiss upon the marble brow of the poor boy. The other women, kneeling, prayed around him. Bellamare, seated near the edge of the stage, was motionless and gloomy. I had seen him thus but once upon the rock. Léon was sobbing, as he leaned upon the shaft of a scenic column. Lambesq, genuinely affected, kept the perfumes burning on a beautiful tripod that the prince had lent us to figure in our tragedy; then he went from one to another, as if to speak, but he said nothing. He reproached himself for his long hostility to Marco, and seemed to feel a need of accusing himself aloud; but every one pardoned him inwardly. He had really conducted himself well in our campaign of the morning, and we no longer felt bitterness toward a man who wished to rehabilitate himself.

Moranbois returned to announce that the grave was ready. We thought that it was separating ourselves too quickly from our poor comrade, as if we were in haste to bid farewell to a mournful spectacle. We wished to pass the night in watching him. Moranbois shared our feelings, but he warned us that we had no time to lose in packing our baggage. The secret of the harem had not transpired outside; but although Nikanor had not revealed

it, the guardians of the interior had guessed it, and were beginning to acquaint the dwellers in the valley with it. The murder of the two boys could not fail to be regarded as an act of justice, and their fault as execrable. More than one family professed Christianity and Islamism at the same time. In this strange country, patriotic warfare caused them to forget religious differences. It began to be known also that the prince was disappointed in his ambition, that the mountain chiefs rejected the idea of following a leader, and that his soldiers, who had flattered themselves that they would be the first in the confederation, were humiliated by his downfall. They attributed it to his French ideas, and began to have a detestation for his actors. So the prince had informed Moranbois, to whom he had just been speaking. He had advised him to bury Marco in a little cypress grove which formed part of his private domain, and not in the cemetery, where there was a waste corner for executed criminals and enemies of their religion: which?

Moranbois had not thought it best to resist. Knowing very well that, if we offended the religious customs of the country, the remains of our companion would be outraged as soon as our backs were turned, he had accepted the prince's offer, and dug the grave himself, in the place that the latter had shown him.

It was a very dense thicket, which one entered by the back door of the chapel, passing through a winding alley of laurels and cherry-trees. So we could in broad daylight and with-

out being seen from without, transport our poor dead under this impenetrable shade. The prince had purposely withdrawn all his men from his outhouses and from that part of the domain which we should have to cross. We could deposit the body in the Greek chapel for a brief space; we even desired to do so, not that any one of us, except Régine and Anna, was a very good Christian, but we wished to render to the victim of a barbarous custom all the honors that barbarism could afford.

When we had laid the dead boy in his last bed, levelled the earth with care, and covered the spot once more with moss and withered leaves, Léon, pale and with uncovered head, began.

"Adieu, Marco," he said; "adieu to thee, the youth, the hope, the mirth, the light of our wandering family, the sweet and filial companion of our labors and of our successive miseries, of our careless joys and of our bitter disasters! This is the cruellest of our reverses, and we are about to leave thee here, alone, in an unfriendly earth, where we are forced to hide thy remains, like those of one accursed, without being permitted to leave a stone, a name, a poor flower, above the place where thou reposest.

"Poor dear child, thy father, an honest workman, unable to oppose thy ardent desire, had confided thee to us as to worthy people, and among us thou hast found fathers, uncles, brothers, and sisters; for we had all adopted thee, and we would have protected thee and guided thee in thy career and in thy life. Thou hast

deserved our affection, thou hadst the most generous instincts, the most charming talents. Lost with us upon a rock amid the furious waves, thou wert, despite thy youth, one of the most devoted. An evil influence, a fatal temptation, exposed thee to a peril that thou didst defy, to a folly that thou hast expiated fearfully, but with courage and resolution, I am certain, since no cry of distress, no despairing appeal to thy comrades, broke the horrible stillness of the accursed night which has separated us forever.

"Poor dear Marco, we loved thee well, and we will cherish an ineffaceable remembrance of thee, a benediction always tender! Funereal trees, guard the secret of his last sleep beneath your shade. Be his winding-sheet, ye snows of winter and wild flowers of the spring! Birds that circle through the heavens above our heads, winged voyagers more fortunate than we, you are the sole witnesses that we can invoke! Nature, indifferent to our tears, will at least reopen her maternal bosom to that which was a body, and will carry back to God, principle of life, that which was a soul. Spirits of the earth, mysterious essences, breaths and perfumes, indefinable forces, receive the particles of generous vitality left here by this boy whom the ferocity of men has immolated; and if some unhappy exile like us should come by chance to tread upon his tomb, whisper to him softly, 'Here reposes Pierre Avenel, called Marco, murdered at eighteen years of age, far from his country, but consecrated and be-

dew'd by the tears of his adopted family.'"

Impéria set us the example, and we all kissed the earth on the spot that hid the poor boy's forehead. We found the prince, who had waited for us in the chapel. He was sad, and I believe that he spoke sincerely to us, this time.

"My friends," said he, "I am agonized by this double murder, and, accomplished under such conditions, I regard it as a crime. You will carry away a sorry opinion of us; but take everything into consideration. I wished to introduce some civilization into this savage country. I believed that it was possible to make the idea of progress enter these heroic but hard and narrow minds. I have failed. Shall I retaliate? I do not know. Perhaps I shall bear away the palm at the moment when the Mussulman's ball shall lay me on the earth. Perhaps you will see me again in France, surfeited with perils and deceptions, consoling myself in the focus of art and letters. Whatever be the future, preserve a little regard for me. I do not regret having associated you with a generous attempt. Let Rachel be here or elsewhere, the actress who has charmed me must retain, in all security of conscience, the homage of my satisfaction and my gratitude. It is necessary that I now deprive myself of elevated pleasures, and I realize that my residence must have become odious to you. Do not wait until it is impossible, for, as you see, I am not always as absolute a master as I seem. I will give orders that to-morrow, at daybreak, your

departure may be effected, without noise and without hindrance. I will give you as safe an escort as possible, but be armed at all events. I cannot accompany you; my presence would be an additional cause of irritation against you. I know that you are brave, terrible even, for you have dealt hard measure to some of my men, who thought themselves invincible. They are not to be feared at present, but they have relatives outside, and the *vendetta* is as formidable in our mountains as in those of Corsica. Be prudent, and if you hear, in your journey, some insult or some threat, do as I do often, have the appearance of not hearing it."

He next inquired where we intended to go; we had been undecided, but our resolution was taken on the instant to return to Italy. We had a horror of the East, and, in this first moment of consternation and anger, it seemed to us as if we should always have to tremble for each other there.

"If you return to Gravosa," said the prince, "my little villa is still at your disposal for whatever time you wish. Do not carry off the properties and costumes, which might embarrass and impede your progress on the mountain; I will send them after you to-morrow."

We packed our effects the same evening, and at daybreak on the morrow we presented ourselves at the drawbridge. The mules, the horses, and the men for our escort were ready on the other side of the moat; but, by a delay that seemed voluntary, they made us wait a long time for the bridge. At last we left the valley, without seeing any one,

and entered the defile which penetrated far into the mountain. We were not without apprehension; if we had enemies, they would await us there. Our guides, to the number of four, rode unconcernedly before us; their horses went more swiftly than our mules, and when they were in advance they did not turn back to see if we could follow them; they continued to increase the distance between themselves and us. If we had been attacked, they probably would not have returned.

Still, we were not uneasy. We saw no hostile face, and at about three o'clock in the afternoon we had passed over two thirds of the road, and were near enough to the plain to think ourselves out of danger. We did not know that the danger lay precisely at the boundary of the prince's states.

It was much warmer than on our first passage through these mountains, and our animals threatened to refuse service. Our escort paused at last, on seeing us obliged to halt, and one of the horsemen gave us to understand, by signs, that, if we wished to drink and to water the animals, there was a stream at a little distance.

We were not thirsty; we had supplied ourselves with vials; but the beasts, and above all the one which bore our little fortune and our most valuable effects, turned obstinately in the direction of the indicated spot. We were obliged to go with them. When we saw to what a precipice they led us, we alighted, and loosened their bridles. Our guides had done the same with their horses; only one

followed them, leaping from rock to rock, to prevent them from remaining too long in the water. Moranbois held back the mule, which could not have reascended with her burden, but before he had relieved her of the cash-box, that is to say the saddle-bag that contained our funds, she escaped from his hands, and darted into the ravine.

Moranbois, fearing lest she should lose our riches, intrepidly followed her. We knew his strength and dexterity, and the place was passable, since another man ventured there. Still, we were anxious, and it was not without uneasiness that we saw him sink down and disappear under the bushes that overhung the slope. After a moment, unable to remain there, I followed him, without informing the others of my intention.

The abyss was still deeper than it had appeared; half-way down the descent became less difficult, and I began to see the bottom, when a man of repulsively dirty aspect, armed with a gun directed toward me, rushed out from behind a rock, and said to me in bad French: "You not stir, not fear, not cry,—or death. You go on, you see!"

He seized me by the arm, and led me two steps farther. Then I saw, in a perpendicular, funnel-shaped gorge, Moranbois, the fearless, invincible Moranbois, thrown down by six men who gagged and pinioned him. A score of others around them, armed with guns, pistols, and knives, rendered all hope of assistance impossible. The guide and the other animals had disappeared. Only the mule that Moranbois had followed

was in the hands of these robbers, who were beginning to unload her.

I perceived it all, in the twinkling of an eye, with desperate clearness. I could not fire upon the bandits without a risk of hitting the prisoner. I quickly realized that I must remain silent.

"Not harm," continued the frightful knave who held my arm; "ransom, ransom, that is all!"

"Yes, yes," cried I, with all my might, "ransom, ransom!"

And the interpreter shouted also, probably repeating the same word to his companions in their language.

All their arms were raised directly in token of assent, and my interlocutor continued, "You leave everything up there, the beasts and the boxes, the weapons, the pocket-money, and the jewels. No harm to you!"

"But he!" I cried, pointing to Moranbois; "I demand him, or we will kill you all!"

"Have him safe and sound, make haste or him dead. Tell up there and hurry! find him at the foot of the mountain."

I went up again like a hurricane. Bellamare and Léon had heard strange voices; they came to meet me.

"Let us go back," I said to them, breathless; "help me, let us return!"

In three words all was explained, and there was not a moment's hesitation. Defence was impossible; the three guides who were left us had disappeared. Doubtless, not daring to avenge themselves, they had conducted and delivered us to the brigands of the frontier.

We left everything, even our trav-

elling-cloaks and weapons. We threw them all upon the ground, with a feverish, delirious haste. We had but one thought, to fly with all speed to the foot of the mountain, and recover our friend. Perhaps they deceived us. They murdered him perhaps, while we were leaving all to save him. Perhaps they would assassinate us also, when they saw us alone and disarmed. No matter; one chance of safety for Moranbois and a hundred against us, we must not hesitate.

The bandit who had followed me was perched there on a rock, the loaded gun in his hands. We paid no attention to him. When he was convinced that we were carrying nothing away, and that we showed a lofty conscientiousness about it, he deigned to cry, "Thanks, Excellencies," with an air of derisive courtesy that made us depart with a nervous laugh.

"For him, for him!" cried Impéria, extending to the brigand her diamond bracelet which she was inadvertently about to carry off on her arm. "This for you! Save our friend!"

The knave leaped like a cat, took the bracelet, and wished to kiss the hand that held it out to him.

"Save him! save him!" repeated Impéria, recoiling.

"Run," replied he, "run!"

And he disappeared.

He flew like a bird, and we had a long circuit to make. At last we arrived, desperate, at the spot designated. Moranbois was there, stretched across the pathway, still gagged, unconscious, with fettered

hands. We hastened to unbind him and examine him. They had kept their word to us; they had done him no injury, but the efforts that he had made to free himself had exhausted him. It was more than an hour before he regained consciousness.

We had carried him as far as the plain, for we had seen from a distance thirty brigands swooping down upon our spoils, and we feared lest they might take a fancy to deprive us of our clothes, perhaps outrage the women. Evidently they were cowards, since they had employed this *ruse*; but we were no longer formidable, thanks to the care that they had taken to make us abandon our arms.

When we found ourselves in sight of some miserable dwellings, our first thought was to hasten to them; then we feared lest they might belong to accomplices of a band who plundered travellers at so short a distance; so we rushed into a clump of box and lentisk-trees. We could carry Moranbois no longer; we could no longer support the women. We all let ourselves drop upon the ground. Moranbois recovered, and, after resting for an hour, during which time we had not exchanged a word, in the fear of drawing new enemies upon us, we resumed our journey through a dry plain strewn with stones. We wished to gain a little grove, that we perceived before us, on the right side of the road; when we arrived there it was night.

"We must stop here or die," said Bellamare. "To-morrow at daylight we shall know where we are, and we will consider. Come, my friends,

let us thank God! We are his spoiled children; we have saved Moranbois!"

These words, spoken with a sublime earnestness and gayety, thrilled all the fibres of our hearts. We threw ourselves into each other's arms, crying, "Yes! yes! we are happy, and God is good!"

The Hercules burst into tears; it was probably the first time in his life.

The night was cold, and appeared long to us. We had now no cloaks to protect us, and nothing to eat or drink, after a day of terrible emotion and fatigue; but none of us thought of complaining, and none of us even consented to inform the others of his discomfort and suffering. The women were as stoical as we. The *scoglio maledetto* had case-hardened us, as Moranbois said, and we could endure a hard day and a worse night.

At daybreak we discovered where we were. The road which wound through the plain was really the way to Ragusa; we had only the Dalmatian Mountain to cross, and we took up our march again, still fasting. We encountered dwelling-houses once more; we had not a sou to pay for any breakfast whatever. We rummaged ourselves; we shook ourselves; some sleeve-buttons, overlooked in the stripping effected for the ransom, some handkerchiefs, an ear-ring, — these would pay our way until Ragusa, and we found ourselves still rich for a day. After that, it would be death or beggary, a new phase of this adventurous life which seemed to wish to spare us no evil fortune.

We saw before us a little farm,

that had somewhat the appearance of a Norman oak-grove.

"Let us knock there," said Bellamare, "but it will not do to frighten the people, and we have a pitiful aspect. — Ladies, a little toilet, if you please; restore some shape to your little battered hats; fasten up with pins, if you have pins, your torn skirts. Gentlemen, retie your cravats. And you, Lawrence, draw up that bit of strap which makes you a tail. The idiots of the country are capable of taking you for a *Nyam-Nyam*."

I felt for the bit of strap and drew it up; it was the remainder of the narrow belt which I always wore under my waistcoat, and which contained my bank-notes. Not having been able to unbuckle it quickly enough, I had grasped it impatiently, and, as it was much worn, it had broken. I had thrown upon the heap of our choicest spoils what remained in my hand, thinking to sacrifice thus conscientiously my last resource.

What was my surprise when, on looking at the portion that still hung at my side, I saw that it yet contained my five thousand francs very nearly intact!

"Miracle!" I cried; "my friends, fortune smiles upon us, and the star of Bohemians protects us! Here are the means for returning to France, without asking alms. Let us breakfast plentifully, if we can. I have something with which to replace the sleeve-buttons and handkerchiefs which will pay our bill, for my paper money will not pass in this desert."

We made an excellent rural repast

at the house of some very hospitable people, who talked with us by signs, and who were so pleased with us that they made us go a good part of our journey in a sort of antique chariot with solid wheels that groaned infernally. Our little gifts had proved a great success.

We arrived at Ragusa in not quite as fine condition as we had left it. Our first care was to hasten to the French consulate, where I changed one of my bank-notes, and we related our sad adventure. We were told that there was no hope of recovering our fortune; we were lucky to have preserved our lives.

It must be that the *heiduques* — that is the name they gave these brigands — were very numerous at that time, and that their bands were afraid of each other, since they had not taken time to strip us of our clothes and even of our shirts. Doubtless they had refrained from murdering us, in order not to attract the other birds of prey by the noise of a combat; they had contented themselves with our wholesale plunder, rather than share with new-comers the lesser spoils.

Lambesq, who was suspicious, thought that the prince was a party to this transaction, so as to reimburse himself; but none of us would entertain this fancy. The prince had been wrong in only one respect, apparently; this was not having furnished us with a sufficiently numerous and reliable escort; but had he not warned us that he could do no better? And then were we certain of having been betrayed by our guides? Seeing the brigands in force, and not wishing to lose their lives for us, three of them

had fled. The fourth, the one who had been captured with Moranbois, unable to hope for a ransom for himself, must have been killed.

The chancellor of the consulate told us that our robbers were certainly strangers to the country. The natives kill for revenge, and plunder the dead only in time of war. They do not know the Italian custom of ransom. I remembered that the knave with whom I had been forced to compromise had a face and accent entirely different from the people of the country.

All conjectures were, however, very useless; we were ruined, irretrievably. We arranged for our departure the next day. We did not wish to make capital of our mishap by beating the big drum, that we might make money in the country; we were, besides, too much fatigued to set at work again. The next day we received our costumes and properties that the prince had sent us, without suspecting our misfortunes. Doubtless, had he known them, he would have offered us some recompense; and perhaps we might have accepted it, if it had not been for the memory of our poor Marco, which now stood between us and his munificence. We could not even write to him what had happened to us. If he treated our guides with severity, a rebellion might break out against him. There were victims enough already. We had only one desire, to leave, as soon as possible, this country, which had proved so disastrous to us.

We bought some clothes and engaged our passage on the Austrian

Lloyd steamer for Trieste. While dining at the only hotel of the town, and talking of our last adventure, Moranbois told us that it cost us dearer than it was worth.

"Hush," said Bellamare, "nothing is worth so much as a brave man, and nothing is better for the health than a brisk movement! See, my well-beloved strollers, are we not happier since that time than we were on leaving that fortress of misfortune? We took away a fortune that truly was too bitter for us! We had occasion to detest the savages who had given it to us, at the cost of one of our dearest heads. Every enjoyment that this money might have procured us would have oppressed our hearts like a remorse, and we could never have amused ourselves without seeing the pale face of Marco in the midst of us. Now, this face will smile upon us, for, if the brave boy could return, he would say to us, 'Weep no more; what you could not do to save me, you have done for another, and, this time, you have succeeded.' Come, Moranbois, be no longer sad. Is it because, for the first time in your life, you have been *thrown*, my Hercules? Had you expected to knock down thirty men, single-handed? Is it as cashier that you sigh? What is there so out of order in our finances? When we left here, five weeks since, we had no great amount; we felt very proud of earning so much in so short a time it was not natural, it could not last; but here we are, still upon our feet, since we have our implements of labor, our properties, and our costumes. One of us finds his old float-

ing capital again, by a miracle. We are going to rest ourselves at sea, to salute the *scoglio maledetto* in passing, and laugh in its face; after which we will perform, and we shall all have talents of the first order; you will see! Purpurin himself shall recite verses correctly. What would you have! We have suffered much together, and the hours of devotion have ennobled us. We have earned something more than wealth, we have become better. We love each other more; we shall still quarrel at rehearsals, perhaps, but we feel sure in advance that we shall pardon each other everything, and that we can disagree without ceasing to love each other. Come! Since the departure from Saint Clement, all is for the best, and I drink to the health of the brigands!"

The word of Bellamare had a sovereign influence over our minds, and I know of no discouragement from which it would not have lifted us. We were, like all actors, very mocking and facetious with each other; but he, the most mocking and facetious of all, had so ardent a conviction on serious occasions, that he rendered us enthusiastic as himself.

So we had not a regret for our vanished fortune, and Moranbois had to follow the example of the others.

During our passage we all had the expectation of seeing the *scoglio maledetto* again. We should certainly have recognized it among a thousand; but we did not pass it, or we passed it in the night. In vain we questioned the crew and the passengers; they could not inform us, since we had christened the island at random,

and none of us were sufficiently versed in geography to set competent people on the track. Two or three times, we fancied that it appeared to us in the evening mist: it was a dream. Where we thought we saw familiar outlines there was nothing.

"Let us preserve this rock in our imagination," said Léon. "There it will be still more terrible and beautiful than the real vision would represent it to us."

"More beautiful?" cried Régine; "you found it beautiful, did you? Poets are mad enough!"

"No," replied Léon, "poets are wise; they are, in fact, the only wise ones who exist. When others are disturbed and frightened, they dream and contemplate; even while suffering, they see; they have the enjoyment of regarding and appreciating until their last hour. Yes, my friends, it was a splendid place, and I have never understood the fascination of the sea so perfectly as during that week of anguish, when we were face to face and side by side with it, always threatened and insulted by its blind wrath, always protected by that rock which it has assailed for incalculable ages, without being able to devour it. We were, nevertheless, in the very bowels of the monster; and I often thought, at that time, of the legend of Jonah in the whale. Doubtless the Prophet was cast like us upon a rock. In his day they related everything in metaphor, and perhaps his refuge had the fantastic form of the Scriptural leviathan; perhaps, like us, he might have hollowed out a grotto to shelter himself, during his

three days and three nights of shipwreck."

"Your explanation is ingenious," said Bellamare; "but relate to us, then, your impressions of seven days and seven nights in the bowels of the rock, for, as for me, I confess to not having had the wisdom to admire anything except our persistency in not wishing to die there."

"To relate contemplations, interrupted every moment by the suffering of others, is impossible," responded Léon. "You did not wish to die, and each of you was providentially sustained by some instinct or by some ruling thought. Régine desired to gain her safety in order to fast no longer; Lucinde felt that she was still too handsome to throw up the game; Anna —"

"Ah! as for me," said Anna, "I was sustained by nothing. I was resigned to dying."

"No! since you cried with fear at the approach of death."

"I cried without knowing why; however, when I calmed myself, it was with the thought of seeing once more, in another world, the two poor little children that I have lost. But let us speak of the others, if it makes no difference to you!"

"For my part," said Bellamare, "I thought of you all, and never have I appreciated you all so well. My friendship for you mingled with my artistic sentiment, and I kept repeating, often involuntarily, this reflection, which would not leave my head, 'What a pity that there is not an enlightened public there, to see how fine and dramatic they are!' Seriously, I mechanically noted all

the effects. I studied the rags, the *posés*, the groups, the aberrations, the accent, the color, and the form of all these scenes of despair, heroism, and madness."

"And I," said Impéria, "I heard, continually, a mysterious music in the wind and in the waves. In proportion as I became weaker, this music assumed more connection and intensity. A time came, it was during the last days, when I could notice admirable measures and sublime harmonies."

"As for me," said Lambesq, "I was irritated at the dry noise made by the stones heaped up by our labors in the beginning; when the wind scattered them, it was like the derisive plaudits of a dissatisfied audience, and I was furious with the head of the 'claque,' who let our success go adrift."

"You see plainly," replied Léon, "that you were all bound to life by the force of habit or the obstinacy of your specialty. So it is not astonishing that, until the moment when I saw the tartan sailing toward us, and the form of Moranbois standing upon the deck, I should have been preoccupied and sustained by the wish to admire and to describe. That archipelago where we were imprisoned; those bare and jagged rocks, which at their base took all the green reflections of the sea, and at their summit all the ethereal hues of heaven; those irregular, forbidding, cruel forms of desert islands that we could not reach, and that seemed to summon us like instruments of torture, that they might grind and tear us under their sharp teeth; — all this

was so grand and so threatening, that I felt eager to measure myself by poetry with these terrible things. The more I realized our abandonment and powerlessness, the more I thirsted to crush by the genius of inspiration those gloomy giants of stone and that insatiable fury of the waves. I was indifferent to death, since I had had time to compose a masterpiece and inscribe it on the rock."

"And this masterpiece?" cried I. "You composed it? you will repeat it to us!"

"Alas!" responded Léon, "I believed I did so! Not having strength to cut the rock with a knife, I wrote it in my album. I guarded it sacredly in my breast, during the days of stupefaction which succeeded our deliverance. I endeavored to read it again in secret; I did not understand it; and I persuaded myself that it was in consequence of the state of physical weakness to which I was reduced. When I felt restored and strengthened, at the house of Prince Klémenti, I discovered, with horror, that my verses were not verses. There was neither rhyme nor metre; the idea, even, had no sense. It was the product of a complete mental alienation. I consoled myself by the reflection that this madness of rhyming even in agony had, at least, rendered me insensible to suffering and superior to despair."

"My children," said Bellamare, "if we do not discover our rock in this passage it is probable that we shall never have either the time or the opportunity to find it. Does it not seem incredible to you that within two days' distance of Italy, in the

midst of civilized Europe, upon a narrow sea, continually frequented, explored in every portion, we have been lost upon an unknown island, as if we had been in quest of some new land, on a voyage of exploration toward the Poles? This adventure is so improbable that we shall never dare relate it. They will not believe us when we say that the captain and the two sailors died, unable to tell the name of the rock, not knowing it, probably, and that those who brought us away from it, and who must have informed us, did not find one of us capable of understanding and remembering it. I confess that, for my own part, I was completely idiotic. I still acted mechanically. I cared for you all, and Impéria assisted me. Léon and our poor Marco also busied themselves with the sick; but it would be impossible for me to say how many times we took to reach Ragusa, and I certainly passed two days there before knowing in what country we were, and without thinking to inquire."

"I will confess the same thing," said Impéria; "and Léon was still longer so, I wager."

"Do you know," replied Léon, "that we have, perhaps, dreamed this shipwreck? Who can swear that what he sees and hears is real?"

"I have heard," said Bellamare, "of a metaphysical or religious belief of the ancient East, which held that nothing exists but God. Our passage on the earth, our emotions, our passions, our griefs, and our joys, all this was only vision, effervescence of some intellectual chaos; latent world which aspired to be, but which fell

back incessantly into nothingness, to lose itself in the sole reality, which is God."

"I understand nothing of all that," said Régine, "but I assure you that I did not dream the hunger and thirst on the accursed rock. Every time that I think of it, I have almost a bell ringing in my stomach."

We arrived at Trieste, without having perceived the rock. On inspecting geographical charts, we thought, and were told that we must have been stranded on the *scoglio pomo*, in the middle of the sea, or the *Lagostini*, nearer to Ragusa; but we must remain in perpetual uncertainty, more especially as some learned man gave us another explanation that better pleased our excited imaginations. According to him, our shipwreck coinciding with the shock of earthquake which was felt upon the coasts of Illyria, the undiscoverable rock must, at that moment, have issued spontaneously from the sea, and then have sunk back into it. Thus, we had not only been threatened with dying of hunger and cold, but we might, besides, at any moment, disappear below, like the condemned demons of an operatic *dénouement*.

On leaving Trieste, where we played *Les Folies Amoureuses*, *Quitte pour la Peur*, *Les Caprices de Marianne*, *Bataille de Dames*, we strolled about the North of Italy, enlisting as coadjutors a French troupe, some members of which were passable. Those who were good for nothing swelled our number, and we could extend our repertory and undertake pieces containing many characters, — *Trente Ans ou la Vie d'un Joueur*, *Le*

Comte Hermann, etc. We were tolerably successful, and the public appeared very well satisfied with us. Nevertheless, the profession lost much of its charm for me. The new company was so different from ours! The women had impossible morals, the men intolerable manners. They were genuine strollers, eaten up with vanity, irritable, coarse, quarrelsome, indelicate, drunken. Each of them had one or two of these vices; some possessed them all at once. They understood nothing of our mode of life, and laughed at us for it. I had been reared among peasants rude enough; but they were people of good breeding in comparison with these. And all that did not prevent them from knowing how to wear a costume, moving on the stage with a certain elegance, and concealing the hiccups of drunkenness under a grave or excited air.

In the greenroom they were odious to us. Régine, alone, kept them respectful by her cool and unrestrained derision. Lambesq, at rehearsal, threw the properties at their heads. Moranbois restored them to their places by main force. Bellamare pitied them for having fallen so low from excessive poverty and weariness of their deceptions. He strove to raise them again in their own eyes, to make them realize that the misery of their condition arose from their idleness, their want of conscientiousness in performance and of respect toward the audience. They heard him with astonishment, sometimes with a little emotion; but they were incorrigible.

It became evident to me that me-

diocrity on the stage inevitably leads to ruin those who have not an exceptional moral worth, and I asked myself if, deprived of the direction of Bellamare and the influence of Impéria and Léon, who were, themselves, exceptional characters, I should not have sunk as low as these unfortunate actors. The personal qualities of the managers of these wandering troupes were worst of all. The almost continual lack of success reduced them to perpetual bankruptcy. They made up their mind to it, with a shameful philosophy, and did not shrink from any breach of faith to regain their footing. They inquired by what miracle Bellamare had preserved his spotless name and his honorable connection. It never entered their minds to consider that he had had no other secret than that of being an honest man to gain on all occasions the support of honest people.

It was long before we separated from this heterogeneous element; and when we were once more in France, alone by ourselves, we experienced a great relief. We replaced Marco by a pupil from the Conservatory, who could not secure an engagement in Paris, and who had no talent of his own, since he confined himself to aping Régner. Régine and Lucinde remained with us as *pensionnaires*, and Lambesq asked to be a member of the association. We did not hesitate to admit him. He had, certainly, incorrigible defects, an immense vanity, a puerile capriciousness, and a self-love which was extraordinary from its openness; but he had, however, gained wisdom from

adversity, and, after having excited our indignation at the time of the shipwreck, he had atoned for his misconduct at Saint Clément and on the mountain. He had reflected on the inconvenience of selfishness. His heart was not entirely cold; he was attached to us. He went so far as to make proposals of marriage to Anna, who had, at one time, wished to be his wife, but whom he had deceived. Since then, however, she had loved several others, and she refused, while thanking him, and promising him a faithful friendship.

In connection with this subject, Anna, who had a habit of never alluding to the past, explained her feelings to me in a chance *tête-à-tête*. I desired to know what she thought of Léon, and if the stifled regrets of the latter had any substantial foundation.

"I do not like," she told me, "to look back. There are only sorrows and disappointments for me there. I am very impressible, and I should have died ten times, if I had not a supreme resource in my character, which is to forget; I have often believed myself in love, but, in reality, I have loved only my first lover, this madman of a Léon, who might have made a faithful wife of me, if he had not been excessively jealous and suspicious. He was very unjust to me; he believed that Lambesq was his rival at a time when he was nothing of the sort; then I attached myself to Lambesq, through pique, and after that to others through *ennui*, caprice, or despair. Think of that, Lawrence; one sports with love, when one can call it fancy; but there are fancies

of intrigue that are gay, and there are those that are tragic, because they arise from fear of remembrance and horror of loneliness. Never laugh at me, then ; you do not know the pain you give me, you who are better than the others, and who, not loving me, would not feign to love me, to make me commit another indiscretion ! If Léon sometimes speaks of me to you, tell him that my absurd and broken life is his work and that his distrust has ruined me. Now, it is too late. I have only to forgive, with a gentleness that they take for unconcern, and which will doubtless finish by becoming that."

Our life began again to be what it had always been before our disasters, — a lively journey without loss or profits, a pellmell of feverish occupation and wasted time, a whole of kind relations interspersed with little quarrels and warm reconciliations. This life, without repose and without reflection, gradually converts the provincial actor into a being who may be considered, not as in a chronic state of drunkenness, but always half inebriated. The theatre and travelling stimulate like spirits. The soberest among us were often the most irritable.

In the beginning of the winter, I received a letter which broke off my artistic career, and decided my life. My godmother, a good woman who sells groceries here, wrote to me : "Come quickly. Your father is dying !"

We were then at Strasburg. I scarcely took time to embrace my comrades, and departed. I found

my father out of danger. But he had had a stroke of apoplexy, in consequence of violent emotion, and my godmother related what had happened to me.

No one, in my little town, had ever suspected the profession that I had embraced. The people here do not travel for pleasure. They have no affairs abroad, being all descended from five or six families, rooted in the soil for ages. If the younger ones sometimes wish to go to Paris, that is all. I had never played at Paris, and the troupe — we called ourselves the "Bellamare Society" — had never had occasion to approach my province. So I had not even taken the trouble to conceal my name, which was not peculiar enough to attract attention, and which served very well in my line of characters.

It happened, however, that a commercial traveller, with whom I had become acquainted in his passage through Auvergne, during my vacation of the preceding year, arrived at Turin at the same time with us, and recognized my face on the stage and my name on the poster. He tried to see me at the *café* where I sometimes went after the performance ; but I did not go there that evening. He departed the next day, and I lost the opportunity to request him to keep it secret, in case he should revisit Arvers.

He passed through there two months later, and did not fail to inquire about me. No one could tell him where I was or what I was doing. Then, either from a love of talking or a desire to reassure my anxious friends, he informed them of

the truth. He had seen me, with his own eyes, upon the boards.

At first the news caused only a stupefied surprise, and then came comments and questions. They wished to know if I earned much money, and if I was making a fortune. To make a fortune is, in Auvergne, the criterion of good and evil. A profession that enriches is always honorable; a profession that does not enrich is always disgraceful. The commercial traveller did not scruple to tell them that I was on the road to starvation, and that, since I liked to travel, I should have done better to go about selling wines.

The news made the circuit of the little town directly, and even reached my father, before the end of the day. You remember that he applied the term *comedian** to leaders of bears and swallows of swords. He shrugged his shoulders, and denounced as liars those who thus calumniated me. He sought out the commercial traveller, at this very inn, and tried to understand the matter. Delighted to assume a little importance in the eyes of an alarmed father and an astonished population, our good man rehabilitated me somewhat by saying that I did not juggle with little balls, and that I did not dance the tight-rope; but he declared that my existence was very precarious, that probably I was in a way to acquire all the vices that an adventurous life engenders, and that it

would be rendering me a service to remove me from a profession which was leading me astray or making money out of me.

My poor father withdrew, very sad and very thoughtful; but he had such confidence in me, that he did not wish to tell me his first impression. With the patience of the peasant who knows how to wait until the corn sprouts and ripens, he would leave it until my next letter. I wrote him every month, and my letters always tended to preserve his security. I had not related my terrible adventures to him, and I had only to render him a good account of my studies, without telling him their nature and object.

He regained confidence. I was a good son; I could not deceive him. If I was a *comedian*, it was doubtless something honorable and wise, of which he could not judge; but a little sadness still lingered in his heart, and he was more constant in his attendance at church in order to pray for me.

With great religious faith, he had never been devout. He became so, and the *cure* gained an ascendancy over him. Then, by degrees, his anxiety was aroused and sustained. They combated his trustful apathy; they represented me to him as a lost sheep, then as a hardened sinner; at last, one day, they told him that, if he did not snatch me from the claws of Satan, I should be damned; that I should have a shameful, perhaps a terrible death; and that I should not be buried in holy ground, but thrown to the vultures.

This was the last blow for him.

* The French word *comedian* is a general term applied to actors, and does not necessarily imply who performs a comic part. — *Trans-*

He returned home heart-broken, and next day he was found almost dead in his bed. The sacristan, who was his particular friend, my poor god-mother, who is a good-natured fool, and Mother Ouchafol, who is an ill-natured fool, had contributed not a little by their silly talk and their absurd ideas to dishearten and kill my father.

When I saw him out of danger, I swore to him that I would never leave him without his full and entire permission, and he resumed his spade. I imposed silence on our stupid friends, and I endeavored to make my father understand and accept the resolution that I had taken to be an actor. It was not easy; he had been struck with deafness in his illness, and his mind had not yet become clear. I saw that reflection wearied him, and that a secret anxiety retarded his complete recovery. I began to work in the garden, and pretended to take great pleasure in it; his face brightened, and I saw that a thorough revolution had taken place in his ideas. Formerly, desirous that I should be a gentleman, he had not allowed me even to touch his farming implements. Now, thinking me damned if I returned to the stage, he saw safety and honor for me only in manual labor and in soldering my life to the soil where he had riveted his own.

All my attempts were fruitless. He did not find a word to argue with me, but he hung his head, grew pale, and went dejectedly to his bed. I gave it up. That unalterable gentleness, that heart-rending silence, only proved to me, too strongly, the im-

possibility of his understanding me, and the invincible power of the fixed idea, damnation. When a generous and tender soul like his has been able to admit this odious belief, it is forever closed.

The physicians had warned me of the probability of one or more relapses, probably serious. I would not risk hastening their return and I submitted; I became gardener.

Nevertheless, I wished to bid adieu to my other family, to Bellamare and Impéria especially. I learned by chance that they were at Clermont; and, as I had left a portion of my effects in their keeping, I easily obtained some days of freedom from my father to settle up my affairs outside, assuring him that I would return at the end of the week.

I found the company beneath their accustomed shelter; they had been unwilling to touch the last bank-notes that I had left in the cash-box. I insisted that they should use them, and that they should repay me only by small instalments, when they could without giving themselves any anxiety in regard to it. I pretended that I had no need of the money; that, condemned to stay indefinitely in my village, I had more than sufficient resources of my own. I told a falsehood; there remained to me absolutely nothing. I would not confess it to my father; I would only ask to share his roof and his bread, as the price of my daily labor.

But before leaving Impéria, I wished to have done with the tenacious hope that I had never been able to overcome, and I requested her to hear me, without distraction or in-

terruption, in the presence of Bellamare. She consented, not without an uneasiness that she could not conceal from me. Bellamare said to her, before me: "My child, I know very well what is to be the subject; I divined it a long time ago. You must listen to Lawrence without alarm or prudery, and reply to him without reticence or mystery. I do not know your secrets; I have no motive and no right to question you; but Lawrence ought to know them, appreciate them, and govern his future conduct by them. Let us all three go away into the country; I will leave you to talk alone. I do not wish to have any opinion, any influence whatever, before Lawrence has spoken to you freely, and with open heart."

We entered a little shady nook, where flowed a limpid stream, and Bellamare left us, telling us that he would return in two hours.

Impéria produced upon me the effect of a victim resigned to the grievous trial of a long-dreaded and perfectly useless confidence.

"I see plainly," I said to her, "that you have guessed also, that you pity me, and that you will never love me; but a drowning man catches at whatever he can grasp, until the last moment, and I am going to enter on an existence which is intellectual death, if I do not carry into it a little hope. Do not then think it useless that I desire to prepare myself for a shipwreck, perhaps worse than that of the Adriatic."

Impéria covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"I know," I said, kissing her wet

hands, "that you have a friendship, a true friendship for me."

"Yes," said she, "a deep, immeasurable friendship. Yes, Lawrence, when you tell me that I do not love you, you do me a frightful wrong. I am not cold, I am not selfish, I am not ungrateful, I am not foolish. Your affection for me has been generous indeed; you have never let me see it, except in spite of yourself, in rare moments of fever and of excitement. When you expressed it to me passionately on the rock, you were mad, you were dying. Afterwards, and almost always, you repressed and conquered it so well that I thought you absolutely cured. I know that you have done everything to forget me, and to make me believe that you cared for me no longer. I know that you plunged recklessly into distractions that were, perhaps, not really worthy of you, and from which you emerged gloomy and almost desperate. More than once, without your knowledge, your eyes have said to me, 'If I am dissatisfied with myself, it is your fault. It was only necessary to give me hope; and I should have been constant and faithful.' Yes, my dear Lawrence, yes, I know all that, and all that you would say to me I could suggest to you. Perhaps, if you had been faithful to me without hope — But no, no, I will not tell you that; that would be too romantic, and perhaps untrue; you would have been still more perfect than you are; you would have been a hero of chivalry. I should even have fallen in love with you; it would have been necessary to conquer it or yield to it; to

conquer it, which is a great grief for you ; to yield to it, which would have been a remorse and a despair for me. Listen, Lawrence ; I am not free, I am married."

"Married !" I cried, "you married ! It is not true !"

"It is not literally true ; but in my own eyes I am irrevocably bound. I have pledged my conscience and my life to an oath which is my strength and my religion. I really love some one, and I have loved him for five years."

"It is not true," I repeated angrily ; "that fable is worn out ; that pretext can serve no longer. You told Bellamare, before me, at Paris, one day when I was still sick, and when I pretended to be asleep, that it was not true."

"You heard that !" replied she, blushing. "Ah well, it is an additional reason."

"Explain yourself."

"Impossible. All that I can tell you is that I conceal my secret, especially from Bellamare. It is to him that I lie and that I shall lie, all the necessary time. It is he who might guess, and I do not wish him to guess."

"Then it is Léon that you love ?"

"No, I assure you that it is not Léon. I have never thought of him ; and as after him there is only Lambesq to suppose, I beg you to spare me the humiliation of denying, and to put no more useless questions to me. I have been sincere with you, always ! Do not punish me by your distrust ! Do not make me suffer more than I suffer already."

"Ah well, my friend, be sincere

even to the end ; tell me if you are happy, if you are loved ?"

She refused to answer me, and I lost command of my will ; this incomprehensible mystery exasperated me. I complained of it with so much energy, that I drew from her a portion of the truth, in consonance, alas ! with what Impéria had told me, with a half-serious tone, at Orleans, on the road which led to the Vachard villa. She had never revealed her love to the one who was the object of it ; he did not even suspect it. She was sure that he would be happy, when she should make it known to him ; but this day had not yet come ; she had two or three years yet to wait for it. She wished to preserve herself free and irreproachable, in order to give confidence to this man who shrank from marriage. Where was this man ? what was he doing ? where and when did she see him ? Impossible to make her say. When I hazarded the supposition that he was not far from the place inhabited by Impéria's father, and that she met him there, every year, when she went to see this infirm father, she replied, "*Perhaps*," but with a tone that seemed to me to signify, "Believe that if you like, you will never guess."

I gave it up, but then, I did all that is humanly possible to show her how insane was this romantic passion. She was sure of nothing in the future, not even of pleasing, and she sacrificed her youth to a dream, to a resolution which resembled a monomania.

"Ah well," replied she, "that is like the love you have for me. From

the beginning you have known that I loved some one who was absent. I said so very distinctly, the first time that you looked at me with too expressive eyes in the greenroom of the Odéon. I have repeated it to you at every opportunity, and it is true. Unable to have my love, you wished for my friendship. You obtained it. You have it. You have contented yourself with it for three years ; you would not have exchanged it for the agitations that would have troubled us uselessly. You know that I should have fled. You were happy with us, even through the greatest miseries and the most mournful trials. We all loved each other dearly ; and, confess it, there were days, weeks, whole months perhaps, when we were so excited, so exalted, that you congratulated yourself on being only my friend. You would not have wished, at those times, to see me exchange our chivalric brotherhood for the ardors and the fancies in which poor Anna consumes herself. Ah well, my life is idolatrous as yours ; an idea, a secret preference, a dream of the future, have made us both insane, and we should understand and pardon each other. You say that I am your fixed idea ; permit me, also, to have my serious, incurable madness. We have no really social existence ; we are outside all conventions, good or bad, that reason suggests to prudent and steady people. Their logic is not ours. Prejudice disappears in vain ; we form a band apart, and those who know us well will say of us that we are, with mystic devotees, the last disciples of an extra-social, extra-practical, extra-human ideal.

To any man, bound to the world as it exists, one can say, 'Where are you going ? to what does that lead you ?' This man, if he is ready to commit great follies, stops, desperate, and sees before him only shame or suicide. As for us, when they ask us where we are going, we answer, laughing, that we go on that we may not stand still, and our future is always full of phantoms that laugh more loudly than we. Discouragement seizes us only when we can no longer count on chance. Do not tell me, then, that I am mad. I know it well since I became an actress, and you are mad, also, since you became an actor. You needed an idol ; I had needed one, before I knew you ; we have met too late."

It seemed to me that she was right, and I argued no longer ; I was even embarrassed when she asked where we should be, if I had succeeded in making her love me.

"Are you free ? Do you not belong to a duty, a country, a father, a labor different from ours ? Have you not committed a great folly in attaching yourself to us, who have no longer either country or family or duty outside our wandering fold ? Have you not prepared a boundless chagrin for yourself, in giving us some years of your youth, knowing that you would be forced to separate from us ? What would you do with me, at this moment if I were your wife ? I do not know whether you have really a competency, and that would make no difference to me, since we could work together ; but could we ? Could you even give me an asylum from which they would

not chase me as a vagabond? Would not the meanest of your peasants think he had a right to scorn and to insult Mademoiselle de Valclos, the *baladine*? You see plainly that you ought to think yourself fortunate in not having assumed duties toward me that you could not fulfil."

"But," I answered, "I did not come to ask your hand; it seemed to me that your heart was free, and you could say to me, 'Hope and return!' My poor father has, they tell me, but a few years, perhaps few months, to live. I intend to devote myself to prolonging his existence as far as possible, and that without regret, without hesitation, without impatience. I do not feel dismayed at my task; I shall perform it, whatever be the future; but the future, it is you, Impéria, and you are not willing that my devotion aspires to a reward? I have often told you that I should inherit a fortune, small indeed, but quite sufficient to continue, and perhaps consolidate, our association. I should have joyfully accepted this community of interests with Bellamare and his friends —"

"No," said Impéria, "Bellamare would not have accepted it. All that is useless, my good Lawrence. Let us not mingle the interests of the world with those of Bohemia. Bellamare will never borrow except to repay, and it is himself alone who can save Bellamare."

"It would at least be permitted me," I replied, "to remain united to his destiny and yours. You will not, then, even leave me the hope of repeating our campaigns, and once more becoming your brother?"

"Within a short time, no," she said; "you would suffer too much from the explanation that we have just been having; but some day, when you have entirely forgiven me for not loving you, when you yourself shall love another woman, — but another woman will not wish that you should leave her, and you see — We turn round in a circle, since for your future happiness it is necessary that you break with the present, and that you renounce it without reservation. I should be very culpable, if I told you the contrary."

Each of her words fell on my heart like clods of earth on a coffin. I was annihilated, and suddenly there arose a violent reaction in me. I felt like the prisoner who breaks his chains, if only to take some steps before he dies. I expressed my love to her with the violence of despair, and again she wept bitterly, telling me that I was pitiless, that I tortured her. Her grief, which was real and which choked her, deceived me for a moment. I persuaded myself that she loved me, and that she was sacrificing herself to a cruel duty. Yes, I swear to you that she seemed to love me, to regret me, and to fear my caresses, for she withdrew her hands from me; and if sometimes, overcome, she concealed her face upon my shoulder, she started back as suddenly, like a woman on the point of yielding. She was neither deceitful nor cold nor coquettish: I knew it, I was sure of it, after so long an intimacy and so many opportunities of seeing her generous character in every sort of trial. I grew mad.

"Sacrifice your oath to me," I said; "forget the man to whom you owe it. For my part, I will sacrifice all to you; I will leave my father to die alone and hopeless. Love is above all human laws; it is all; it can create all and destroy all. Be mine, and let the universe crumble around us!"

She repulsed me gently, but with a mournful air.

"You see," said she, "where passion leads those who listen to it; they blaspheme and they lie! You would abandon your father no more than I would abandon my friend. We should forget them for a day, perhaps; on the morrow we should leave each other, to rejoin them, and if we did not we should despise each other. Leave me, Lawrence; if I listened to you, our love would kill our friendship and our mutual esteem. I swear to you, for my part, that, the day I lose my self-respect, I will do justice to myself, I will kill myself!"

She went to rejoin Bellamare, who reappeared at the entrance of the ravine, and I suffered her to leave me without detaining her. All was over for me, and I entered on a phase of the most utter indifference to life.

Bellamare led Impéria away, after having requested me to wait for him; he had something to say to me. When he returned, he found me riveted to the same spot, in the same attitude, my eyes fixed on the stream, whose little eddies against the stone I was following mechanically, without remembering myself.

"My child," he said to me, as he sat down beside me, "will you, can you relate to me what has passed

between her and yourself? Do you think that you may tell me? I have no right to question you, I repeat; having never been in love with her, I am not authorized to ask of her a positive reply like that which you have just required. She tells me, now as always, that she does not wish to love, and — I owe you the truth, she shows so much grief, that it seems to me that she loves you in spite of herself. It must be that there is an obstacle that it is impossible for me to conjecture. If it is a secret which she has confided to you, do not tell me; but if it is a simple confidence, take me for adviser and for judge. Who knows if I cannot overcome the obstacle, and restore you to hope?"

I related to him all that she had said to me. He reflected, questioned again, sought conscientiously, and found nothing which could explain the mystery. He was even vexed by it. Intelligent, experienced, penetrating as he was, he saw before him, he said, a veiled statue with an indecipherable inscription.

"Let us see," he resumed, in conclusion, "one must never say that a thing is ended. Nothing ends in life. It is never necessary to forswear an affection nor to bury one's own heart. I do not wish you to go away broken or ruined. A man is not a wall, whose stones are crushed upon the road; or a pipe, whose fragments are thrown away at a street corner. The fragments of an intellect are always good. You will return home, and take care of your father; you will do everything he wishes, — water his flower-beds and

pruning his fruit trees, — and you will **think** of the future as of a thing which belongs to you, which is due to you, and of which you will dispose. You know well that on the *scoglio maledetto* I made plans until the last hour, and that they are realized. Go, then, my child, and do not imagine that I accept your resignation as artist. I shall work for you, I shall question Impéria. Now, I must and will know her secret. When I know it, I shall write to you, 'Stay away forever!' or, 'Return as soon as you can!' If she loves you, ah well, it is not so impossible for you to see each other occasionally, unknown to your people. There are always means, if your exile must be prolonged, of rendering it supportable, were it only by mutual confidence and the certainty of meeting again. Go away, then, with an easy mind; nothing is changed in your situation; this doubt that you have endured for three years you can still endure for three weeks, for I engage that you shall know your fate at the end of that time."

This admirable friend succeeded in restoring me to a little courage, and I departed without seeing either Impéria or the others, in order not to lose what little energy was left me. When I was once more at home, I wrote to him to beg him to spare me if he should learn the certainty of my unhappiness. "In that case," I said to him, "write me nothing. I will wait; I will lose my last hope gradually, and without violence."

I waited three weeks; I waited three months; I waited three years. He did not write to me. I have ceased to hope.

I have had one consolation: my father has recovered his health; he is no longer threatened with apoplexy; he is calm; he thinks me happy, and he is happy.

I have forsworn all my artistic dreams, and, wishing to have done with regrets, I have unreservedly become a laborer. I have striven to be again the peasant that I ought to be. I have never reproached my father for having twice sacrificed me, — the first time to his ambition, the second to his devotion. He has not understood his error; he is innocent of it; I revenge myself for it by loving him the more. I have a need of loving; my nature is like that of a faithful dog. My father is the child who is intrusted to me and whom I guard: or, rather, I have the nature of a lover; I need to serve and protect some one; the old man is devoted to me; it is my duty to watch over him and to spare him every grief, every danger, every anxiety. I am grateful to him for being unable to do without me; I thank him for having fettered me.

You may well believe that I have not acquired this resignation in a day; I have suffered much! The life that I lead here is the antipodes of my tastes and aspirations; but I prefer it to the paltry bourgeois ambitions that they would suggest to me. I would not take the slightest situation; I will have no other chain than that of love and my own will. The one I bear wounds me sometimes to my very blood; but it is for my father that I bleed, and I will not bleed for a sub-prefect, a mayor, or even a comptroller of finance. If I were

tax-collector, my dear monsieur, I should regard you as a superior, and I should not open my heart to you, as I am doing at this moment. Bel-lamare told me truly ; when one has devoted himself to the theatre, he never recovers from it. He cannot find his place in the world again ; he has represented too many fine personages to accept the low employments of modern civilization. I have been Achilles, Hypolite, and Tancred, by costume and by figure ; I have stammered the language of the demi-gods ; I should not know how to be either clerk or registrar. I should think myself travestied, and should be still worse as an employee than I was as an actor. In the time of Molière, they had a theatrical situation specified thus, "Such a one plays the kings and the peasants." I have often thought of this contrast which sums up my life and continues as my fiction, for I am no more peasant than I am monarch. I am forever unclassed, imitating the life of others, and having no existence of my own.

Happy love would have made me man as well as an artist. A beautiful lady dreamed of transforming me entirely ; it was undertaking too much ; she would, perhaps, have created the man ; she would have killed the artist. Impéria would do neither ; it was her right. I love her still ; I shall love her always ; but I have sworn to leave her in peace. I submit to it, not passively, that is possible only in appearance, but with a secret exaltation that I reveal to no one. Perhaps I display therein the vanity of the strolling player who

loves lofty rôles, but I act my play without the support of any public. When this exaltation grows too strong, I become the actor, that is to say, the rhapsodist, the merry-maker, the singer of village ballads with my village comrades. I drink, occasionally, to shake off my trouble ; and when my imagination wings its flight too high, I make love to ugly girls, who are not cruel, and do not force me to lie in order to please them.

This will last as long as the life of my father, and I ought to adopt a well-tempered philosophy to preserve me from the sacrilegious desire of his death. I never allow myself, then, to think of what I shall become when I have lost him. Upon my honor, monsieur, I know nothing of it, and I do not wish to know.

So there you have the explanation how the man whom you saw half intoxicated yesterday at the tavern is the same who relates to you to-day a most romantic history. It is true in all respects, and I have told you only the principal events, in order not to tire your patience.

Here Lawrence finished his recital and left me, deferring till to-morrow the pleasure of hearing my reflections. It was two o'clock in the morning.

My reflections were neither long nor formal. I admired this devoted nature. I loved this generous and upright heart. I did not quite understand his persistency in loving a woman either cold or with preoccupied affections. I was established in the very midst of the existing social state. I had no romantic instincts ;

it was, perhaps, on that account that the story of Lawrence had strongly interested me; for interest always springs, to a considerable extent, from astonishment, and a narrator who regarded things from the self-same stand-point as his auditor would not entertain him in the least, I am certain.

The only observation that I could make to Lawrence was as follows: "You will not end your life in the condition to which you now submit. You will no sooner be free, than you will return to the stage, or seek to enter the world. Do not deaden your capability for enjoyment; do not undermine your admirable constitution by excess."

But he feared so much to hear of the future, the word alone damped him so suddenly, that I dared not even pronounce it. I saw plainly that his sacrifice caused him still more sadness than he was willing to avow; and that the idea of a liberty which he would obtain only on the death of his father inspired him with profound terror and anxiety.

I only permitted myself to tell him that, if he must be gardener all his life, it was no more necessary to debase himself in that condition than in any other; and I was so much the more eloquent, that I had been overtaken on the preceding evening by undeniable intoxication. He promised to regulate himself and overcome those moments of weakness when he estimated himself too cheaply. He thanked me warmly for the very genuine sympathy that I expressed to him; we passed two days more together, and I left him with regret.

I could not make him promise to write me.

"No," he answered, "I have stirred up the ashes on my hearth too much by relating you my life. The fire must all go out, forever. If I made a habit of touching it from time to time, I could no longer master it. I see plainly that you pity me; I should begin to pity myself; that must not be!"

I placed myself at his disposal for any service that I could render him, and left him my address. He never wrote to me, and did not even acknowledge the receipt of some books that he had requested me to send him.

Eighteen months had elapsed since my visit to Auvergne, and I was still inspector of finance; my duties had called me to Normandy, and I returned from Yvetot to Duclair, in a little hired calash, on a cold December evening.

The road was good, and, notwithstanding the very gloomy weather, I preferred to arrive at my lodging a little late than be forced to rise very early in the morning, the cold being the sharpest at daybreak.

I had been travelling an hour, when the weather softened beneath the influence of a very heavy snow. An hour later, the road was so covered with it that my driver, whose name was Thomas, and who was a somewhat indolent old man, had some difficulty in not carrying me across country. His hacks several times refused to advance, and at last they refused so effectually that we had to alight to disengage the wheels and take the beasts by the bridle;

but it was all in vain. We were stuck in a ditch. It was then that M. Thomas confessed that he was no longer sure of the way to Duclair, and that he believed we were on the one that led back to Caudebec. We were in the midst of woods, on a very deeply sunken road; the violence of the snow-storm increased, and there was a great risk in remaining there. Not a carriage, not a cart, not a passer by to aid us and direct us.

I was just deciding to roll myself in my cloak, and sleep in the carriage, when M. Thomas told me that he recognized his whereabouts, and that we were in the woods between Jumiéges and Saint Vandrille. These two residences were too far apart to enable the exhausted horses to take us to either; but there was a château nearer, where he was well known, and where we should receive hospitality. I had pitied the poor man, who was as tired as his horses, and I promised him to watch them, while he went through the woods to seek assistance at the neighboring château.

It was very near, in reality, for at the end of quarter of an hour I saw him returning with a reinforcement of two men and a horse. They quickly extricated us, and one of the men, who appeared to be a farm-laborer, told me that we could not regain the road to Duclair in this bad weather. One could not see three steps before him.

"My master," added he, "would be very angry if I did not bring you to sup and sleep at the château."

"Who is your master, my friend?"

"It is Baron Lawrence," he replied.

"Who?" cried I, "Baron Lawrence, the deputy?"

"It is his château," replied the peasant, "which you would see from here, if one could see anything. But come, it does no good to stay there. The horses are in a sweat."

"Go on," I said, "I will follow you."

As the road was very narrow, I literally followed the carriage and the men, and I could address no further questions on the subject of Baron Lawrence; but it was certainly the uncle of my friend the actor. There was but one Lawrence in the Chamber of Deputies, and I wondered at the destiny that was leading me to this potentate of the family. I resolved forthwith to see him, to acquaint him with his nephew's situation, to tell him all the good I thought of this young man, and to combat him if he undervalued him.

The snow, which continued to fall, did not suffer me to see the manor clearly. We seemed to pass through narrow courts, surrounded by lofty buildings. I ascended a broad flight of steps, and was admitted by a servant, who received me very politely, telling me that they were preparing my apartment, and that meanwhile I should find a good fire in the dining-room.

While speaking he relieved me of my snowy great-coat, and passed a bit of cloth over my boots. A great door was opened opposite, and I saw another domestic about to place savory dishes upon a richly appointed table. An immense buhl clock struck the hour of midnight.

"I suppose," said I to the servant, "that the Baron is in bed, and will not disturb himself for an unknown traveller whom this stormy night has brought to his house. Have the goodness to give him my card to-morrow, and if he will permit me to thank him —"

"The Baron has not gone to bed," returned the domestic; "it is his supper hour, and I will take him monsieur's card."

He ushered me into the dining-hall, and disappeared. The other domestic, engaged in serving supper, politely placed me a chair near the fire, threw an armful of pine-cones upon it, and resumed his occupations, without speaking.

I was not cold; I was in a perspiration. I regarded my surroundings. This great hall resembled the refectory of an ancient convent. On looking closer I assured myself that it was not a modern imitation, but a genuine Roman and monastic architecture, something like a branch of Jumiéges or Saint Vandrille, the two celebrated abbeys which once possessed all the surrounding country. Baron Lawrence had transformed the convent into a palace, even as Prince Klémenti. The adventures of the Bellamare troupe recurred to my memory, and I almost expected to see the Friar Ischion or the Commandant Nikanor enter, when the double door at the back of the room was opened, and a tall person, in crimson satin dressing-gown trimmed with fur, advanced to meet me with open arms. It was not Prince Klémenti; it was not Baron Lawrence; it was my friend Lawrence, — Lawrence in

person, a little stouter, but handsomer than ever.

I embraced him with joy. He had come to a reconciliation with his uncle, then; he was the heir presumptive of his title and his wealth!

"My uncle is dead," he replied. "He died without knowing me and without thinking of me; but he had forgotten to make his will, and, as I was his only relative —"

"Only? your father? —"

"My poor dear father! — dead likewise, dead of joy! struck with apoplexy when a notary came to tell him, without preparation, that we were rich. He did not understand that he had lost his brother. He saw only the brilliant lot that had fallen to me, the one hope, the one anxiety of his life; this desire had become more intense with the fear of my damnation. He threw himself into my arms, saying, 'You are a lord, you will never be an actor again! I can die!' and he died. You see, my friend, that this fortune costs me very dear! But we will talk at our leisure; you must be fatigued and chilled. Let us sup; I will keep you as long as possible afterward. I desire to see you, to renew our acquaintance, and resume my story to you; for since our meeting and our separation, I have not had an hour of confidential conversation."

When we were at table he sent away his servants.

"My friends," he said to them, "you know that I like to keep late hours, without making the others do so. Put within our reach whatever we shall require, be certain that nothing is lacking in my guest's

apartment, and go to bed, if you desire."

"At what hour is it necessary to wake monsieur the Baron's guest?" asked the valet.

"You will let him sleep," replied Lawrence, "and you will cease to call me the Baron; I have already requested you not to give me a title that does not belong to me."

The servant left the room with a sigh.

"You see," said Lawrence, when we were alone, "nothing is wanting to my disguise, not even the valets of comedy. Those think themselves lowered by serving a man without title and without arrogance. They are great idiots who incommode me more than they assist me, and who, I hope, will leave me of themselves, when they see that I treat them like men."

"I believe, on the contrary," said I, "that they will, after a little, think themselves very fortunate to be treated so. Give them time to understand it."

"If they understand I will keep them, but I doubt if they become accustomed to the manners of a man who has no desire of personal attendance."

"Or you accustom yourself to being thus attended. You are more aristocratic in appearance and in manners, my dear Lawrence, than any *châtelain* that I have met."

"I play my rôle, dear friend! I know how one should be before the domestics of a good family. I know that, to be respected by them, it needs great kindness and great politeness; for they, also, are actors who

despise what they pretend to venerate; but do not deceive yourself, those that you see here are very vulgar strolling players. My uncle was a counterfeit grandee; at bottom he had all the absurdities of a parvenu who detests his origin. I have seen that in the attitude and habits of his people. Their vanity is of a third-rate order; when they have left me, I shall take better ones, and those will regard me as a truly superior man, because I shall play my part of aristocrat better than any aristocrat whatever. Is it not all fiction and comedy in this world? I do not know, for my part! I asked myself, on taking possession of this estate, if I could endure it for eight days. I did not so much fear being bored by it, as appearing out of place and feeling ridiculous in it; but, when I saw how easy it was to impose upon people in society by a borrowed ease and dignity, I perceived that my old theatrical profession was an excellent education, and that they ought to give a similar one to young men of family."

Lawrence uttered several other paradoxes in a tone of raillery that was not mirthful. He affected a little too much disdain for his new station.

"Come," I said, "do not act a part with a man to whom you have unveiled the inmost recesses of your heart and conscience. It is impossible that you are not happier here than in your village. I put aside your father's death which was inevitable, according to the laws of nature; this sorrow is not so connected with your inheritance that it should

prevent you from appreciating its advantages."

"Pardon me," he replied, "that sorrow and this fortune are closely connected. I told you frankly formerly, I tell you to-day, with the same sincerity, I am a born actor. I had not the talent, but I have kept the passion for it. I have a need to be greater than nature. I have to pose in my own eyes, to forget the man that I am, and ascend, by imagination, above my own individuality. All the difference between the professional actor and myself is that he requires the public, while, as for me, never having much impressed it, I do without it very well; but my chimera is necessary to me; it has sustained me, it has made me accomplish great sacrifices. I know that I am good and honorable; that is not sufficient for me; nature made me so; I aspire, incessantly, to be sublime in my own eyes, and to be so by the act of my will. In short, virtue is my rôle, and I wish to play no other. I know that I shall always play it, or I should take a disgust and aversion to myself. You do not understand that, you take me for a madman? You do not deceive yourself; I am one, but my madness is noble, and, since I must have one, do not seek to deprive me of that. I was truly stoical in my village, for everybody there believed me happy, and I was only so at rare moments, when I could say to myself, 'You have succeeded in being great.' The life of my father, his security, which was my work, was the reason of my sacrifice. I had reached the point when I no longer regretted the past.

At present, what have I to do here that is worthy of me? Have fine manners, express myself more correctly, be more literary than the greater part of the gentlemen who observe and sound me, to know if they may accept me as one of their 'set'? It is really too easy, and it is not an ideal of which I feel very desirous."

I asked him if they were aware, in his new province, that he had been an actor.

"They had heard of it; they repeated it; they were not sure of it, although they had seen formerly upon the stage at Rouen a tall, slender young man who resembled me much, and who bore upon the poster the same name as the Baron. They could not then suppose that I was his relative. He was not accustomed to do the honors for his plebeian connections. When I presented myself as his heir, they questioned my people, who knew nothing and denied indignantly. They questioned me more adroitly, and I hastened to tell the truth with so much boldness and pride, that they hastened to reply that I 'was none the worse for that.' A man who has a hundred thousand francs a year, my dear friend, is not a cipher in the provinces; he is a useful or injurious power, and all who surround him have more or less need of him. I perceived at once that I must either realize my capital and leave the country, or assume the appearance of cleverness. That was part of my monomania, and I played the man of accomplishments, without exerting myself in the least."

"Cease this strain of irony toward

yourself, my dear Lawrence. You were very frank in relating me your life; be so still. You are a man of very intelligent mind, so you are really clever. You wish to appear what you are, it is your right; I will say more, it is your duty. I see nothing in you which savors of the actor, unless it is this affectation of sneering at the social station where destiny places you, which I begin to understand. The man who has subjected his whole being, intellect, face, accent, heart, and feeling to the judgment of a public, often unjust and cruel, has certainly suffered much from this direct contact, and his pride necessarily revolts at the idea that, for a few sous paid at the door, any clown buys the right to humiliate him. I confess that, before knowing you, I had a great scorn for actors. I pardoned only those whose real talent has the right to brave and the power to vanquish all. I felt a sort of disgust for those who were mediocre, and I overcame this disgust only by the compassion with which their distress inspired me, the difficulty of living in this world, the lack of early education, the obstacles to work in modern society. It is this ever-increasing difficulty of finding work, when one is not remarkably endowed, which combats and destroys the prejudice against actors more than all the philosophical arguments; for, at bottom, this prejudice is not without foundation. To present one's self to the public, painted and attired like a buffoon or a hero, that is, like a man who expects to excite the laughter or the tears of a multitude, requires a boldness which

is courage or audacity; and whoever pays has surely a right to cry to him, 'Go to! you are not fine or you are not funny!' Ah well, my dear Lawrence, you say that you were passable, and that was all. So you suffered from not being in the first rank, and sought to console yourself by saying to yourself, with reason, that, in you, the man was superior to the artist; and now that you recall the coldness of the people from the other side of the footlights, you unconsciously cherish a bitterness against them. You force yourself to treat them haughtily, as they treated you, when you belonged to them. They did not find you enough of an actor, and you desire to tell them that their existence is likewise a play to them, that it is bad, and they perform it badly. That is a commonplace which proves nothing, for all is, in reality, frightfully serious, in the drama of the world, and in the world of the drama. Forget, then, this little bitterness. Accept freely your return to liberty and social action. You have a great excuse, an excuse that you have candidly confessed to me, *love*, which is the grand absolution of youth. This love is forgotten, I suppose; if not, it is now able to conquer everything, I suppose again. In any case, you have nothing to blush for in the past; and that is why you ought to greet the world, not like a repentant or defiant fugitive, but like a traveller, who has profited by his experience to judge all things impartially, and who returns home to reflect and act like a philosopher."

Lawrence heard my little sermon through, without interrupting it; and

as he had still a child's heart in a manly breast, he extended both hands to me with emotion.

"You are right," he said; "I feel that you are right, and that you do me good. Ah! if I had a friend near me! I have such need of one, and I am so lonely! Stay, my friend, my whole life is a giddiness, and I am not twenty-eight! I have passed through existences so different, that I no longer really know who I am. All is adventure and romance in this agitated life. There was truly cause to be a little mad. Without you, I should have become utterly so, for, when you met me in a public-house, I was in a fair way to become a village good-for-nothing, perhaps a wretched drunkard, dreaming of suicide in the fumes of the blue wine. Thanks to you, I regained the mastery over myself; but the exaltation increased, and it was time to end it. My poor father, forgive me what I say!"

A tear trembled on his eyelashes; he mechanically poured himself a second glass of malmsey. He turned it out, and as I looked at him he said, "I no longer drink, unless through inadvertency, without knowing what I do. If I remember, you see, I abstain."

"Still, you have your supper at this hour every evening?"

"Yes, a habit of the actor, who loves to turn night into day."

"In the village, however—"

"In the village, I worked all day like an ox, but on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, I did like the others, and those days I did not go to bed. What would you have,—*ennui*? Still

I was a good workman. Already there has ceased to be a trace of it. See! I have white hands, as handsome hands as when I played the lover's rôle. It does not follow that I enjoy myself. Ah! my friend, I speak to you frankly, do not take this for an affectation. I am bored enough to bite off my tongue; I am bored to death."

"Were you not able to create serious occupations for yourself again?"

"Serious! Tell me, then, what there is serious in the life of a newly made millionaire, who is still a stranger in the sphere of practical people. Shall I never be practical, myself? Can I be so? Hear the recital of my three months of country life in this château; but we have remained long enough at table. Come into my room, we shall be more comfortable there."

He took up a silver-gilt candlestick, exquisitely wrought, and after having conducted me through a splendid drawing-room, an immense billiard-saloon, and a marvellous boudoir, he ushered me into a sleeping-room, where I cried out directly, "The blue room!"

"What!" he said, smiling, "you recollect my story well enough, my brief description struck you sufficiently for you to recognize things you have never seen!"

"My dear friend, your story produced such an impression on me that I amused myself by writing it out in my spare moments, changing all the names. I will read it to you, and if my reminiscences lack exactness, if I have altered the coloring, you will correct, you will rectify,

you will change; I will leave you the manuscript."

He told me that it would give him the greatest pleasure.

"This is, then," I resumed, "the famous blue chamber?"

"It is as exact a copy as my own memory afforded me."

"You are then once more enamored of the beautiful unknown?"

"My friend, the beautiful unknown is dead; all is dead in the romance of my life."

"But the famous troupe, Bellamare, Léon, Moranbois,—and she whom I dare not name?"

"They are all dead to me. Absent in America, I know not where; Impéria, having lost her father, accompanied them to Canada, where they were still, six months ago. Bellamare wrote me that he should be in a position, on his return, to refund my money. Every one was well. Let us not speak of them; it troubles me somewhat, and I am, perhaps, on the way to forget —"

"Heaven grant it! It is what I desire above all things for you; but this blue room, it is a souvenir that you have wished, that you wish to preserve?"

"Yes; when I learned that my unknown lived no longer, her memory regained possession of my heart, and, like the grown-up child that I am, I wished to raise this familiar monument to her memory. You remember that this blue chamber was no more hers than the Renaissance house which I entered by mistake. This charming dwelling, rendered poetical for me by a gracious and

kindly apparition, was, none the less, the only frame wherein I could evoke her veiled image. I have copied the room as well as I was able; only, as this is larger, I could add to it good sofas where we will smoke good cigars."

I asked him how and from whom he had learned the death of his unknown.

"I will tell you directly," he responded. "It is necessary to proceed in order. I resume my story. It will be but a short chapter to add to the romance that you have taken the trouble to write out."

III.

After my poor father's funeral I departed for Normandy, in the frame of mind belonging to a man who travels in quest of change to distract himself from a profound sorrow, in no wise with the intoxication of a poor wretch who wins in a lottery and goes to receive his capital. Of my first and only visit to my uncle I had retained a very disagreeable impression. He had not received me cordially, you remember, since you remember everything; and his housekeeper had looked askance at me. I found the manor as he had left it, namely, in a very good state of repair. The old bachelor was an orderly man; there was not a slate missing from his roof, nor a stone from his walls; but the interior decoration was in a detestable style. There was gilding everywhere, taste nowhere. As everything had been put under seal, and as, until his last

hour, he had been domineering and suspicious, his housekeeper, who did not govern him as much as I had supposed, had been unable to plunder freely. I found, beside a splendid estate, very productive farm-rents, affairs in very good order, and large sums in the bank. I discharged the housekeeper, begging her to carry off three fourths of the rich and hideous furniture, and, yielding to an artist's fancy, an irresistible desire to establish a harmony in every portion of this monument of a by-gone age, I passed all my time in installing myself with taste, with learning, with judgment; in short, exercising my ingenuity to combine comfort with archæology. You will see this to-morrow by daylight; I have succeeded tolerably well, I think, and it will be better when it is all finished. Only, I am afraid, when I have nothing more to do in my house, that I shall not be able to remain in it; for, if I pause for a moment, I yawn and wish to weep. I was not long in perceiving that, if I desired to spare myself much annoyance and distrust, I must reply politely to the attentions that were bestowed on me. I had taken a list of my uncle's friends and acquaintances; I had sent out invitations in my name, since I was the only representative of the family. I received many cards, and even those of the greatest "big-wigs." I ventured to visit them. I was received with more curiosity than cordiality; but it appears that I speedily triumphed over all prejudices. They thought I had much depth and a perfect style. They knew that I had conducted affairs, on taking posses-

sion, in a princely manner. All my visits were returned. They found me occupied in patching up my old walls, and realized that I was not an ignorant bourgeois. My taste and my expenditures established me as a connoisseur and artist, my seclusion ended by making me appear a man of serious disposition. They had imagined I should frequent bad company. What company could I keep? That of actors? I should not know where to find one of those whom I had known, wandering about the world. Workmen of my village? Unless I gave them a pension, I could not take them from their labor.

They did not make allowance for the extraordinary isolation into which an exceptional destiny had thrown me; they believed that I voluntarily abstained from good-fellowship and nocturnal revelry. They were infinitely obliged to me for it. They invited me to appear in the society of the place. I replied that the recent death of my father rendered me still too sad and too little social. They admired me for having loved my father! The young men, my neighbors, invited me to join their field sports. I promised to take part in them, when I had finished my installation labors. They were astonished, on leaving for Paris in the beginning of the winter, that I had no regret in remaining behind; they would have presented me in the best society. I did not wish to appear eccentric; I promised to become later a man of the world. But my resolution is quite taken, my dear friend. I have already seen the most of these people. Their existence will never

be mine. They are nearly all empty. Those who seem to possess intelligence and information have contracted, in their prosperous circumstances, habits of idleness that would drive me mad. Those who serve the government are machines. Those who have independence of thought do not use their mental energy, or they abuse it. All take seriously this thing, without cohesion and without object, that they call the world, and in which I find nothing that has a serious meaning. No, no; once more, do not think that my distrust arises from a foregone conclusion; on the contrary, I seek with anxiety the luminous point in it that could attract and impassion me. I see there only a confused swarm of little things, insignificant, incomplete, unfinished. I have as yet seen only the rehearsals of the play that they perform there. Ah well, this play is desultory, incomprehensible, devoid of interest, passion, grandeur, or gayety. The actors whom I have been able to study are incapable of disentangling it; for those who have talent are scornful or *blasé*, or they feel that their rôles are unachievable and play them coldly. I have been nourished, myself, on noble tragedies and fine dramas. The worst production of art has, moreover, some plan and seeks to prove something; an evening in society seems to have no object save to kill time. What would you have a man do there, accustomed before the public to order his gestures, time his entrances, not say a useless word, not take a random step? To represent an action is to act from logic and reason;

to utter nothings forgotten as soon as said, to listen to idle discussions that good taste forbids even to be deep, is to evince good breeding and knowledge of the world; but it is doing nothing at all, and I am unable to resign myself forever to doing nothing.

The moral of this is not that an actor is too superior to reality to identify himself with it; do not attribute such a boast to me; but understand, then, that any artist whatever converts reality into a mould that his personality occupies and fills. Where his imprint does not mark, he ceases to live; he petrifies. I need to be, not that they may see that I am, but in order to feel that I exist. For the moment, I am archæologist, antiquarian, numismatologist; later, I shall be, perhaps, naturalist, or painter, or chronicler, or novelist, or agriculturist, who can tell? I must always have a passion, a task, an interest; but I shall never be deputy, or prefect, or sportsman, or diplomat, or politician, or treasurer; nothing, in short, that constitutes at the present day what is called a practical man. I shall see if this house that I create inspires me with some idea; if not, I shall leave it and go abroad. But I fear solitude in travelling, as I fear idleness in sedentary life. What is necessary to me, what belongs to my age, what my heart demands, at the same time that it dreads is love, is family life. I should wish to be married, for I shall never know how to bring myself to marry. Still, the thought has occurred to me several times, since knowing my neighbor,

and it is time that I tell you of my neighbor.

Her name is Jeanne, and she has wavy brown hair. Those are her only defects; for they are her sole points of resemblance to Impéria, whose name, as you remember, is Jane de Valclos; and I should have preferred to love a woman who recalled in no respect the one for whom I have suffered so much. For the rest, the contrast is complete. She is tall and beautiful; the other was small and pretty. She has not the ringing voice or the clear utterance of an actress. Hers is a sweet voice, a little indistinct and muffled, which caresses and does not thrill; an utterance which glides on without emphasis, and lays stress only on what is deeply felt. I should say, generally, of this woman, that she is an instrument furnished with those silken strings which have not resonance enough for the orchestra of an opera, but which give out more melody and sweetness in *musica di camera*.

She is tall and beautiful, I told you, and I will add that she is a little awkward, which pleases me infinitely. She would not know how to take three steps upon a stage, without hitting something. This is due to a short-sightedness, which does not allow her to see the outlines of objects without a glass. As for me, the source of instinct and of taste lies in the sense of sight. Those whose extended vision embraces all things are plastic; on the other hand, those who need to look closely are specialists. My neighbor's specialty is domestic life, a little activity that is

not exercised abroad, but which is ingenious and incessant, a watchful and continual solicitude, delicate and inexhaustible for those whose care she undertakes. She is just the opposite of me, who know how to exercise devotion by a great act of resolution, but who, returned to myself, can no longer see anything, except through myself. But she forgets herself; she would take any stamp one chose to give her; she would know how to be *another*, to see with his eyes, to breathe with his lungs, to identify herself with him and disappear.

You see she is the ideal of a companion, a friend, a wife. Add to this that she is free, a widow, and without children. She is very nearly my own age. She is rich enough to have no care for my fortune, and her birth is the same as mine; her grandfather was a peasant. She has been in society, but was never fond of it. She intends to leave it entirely, having met no one who made her desire to marry again. She learned that the abbey of Saint Vandrille was to let for a tolerably moderate sum; and as she has sufficient taste and knowledge to love the preservation of beautiful things, she came to pass some months in its vicinity, to ascertain if the climate would agree with her health, and if the surrounding country would secure her the sort of tranquil and retired life for which she longs. The cottage she has rented joins my park, and we meet once or twice a week; we might meet every day; the obstacle, alas! is on my side, my faint-heartedness, my dwelling on the past,

my fear of no longer knowing how to love, despite the need of love that is consuming me.

I must tell you how we became acquainted. It was the most prosaic way in the world. I had been passing two days at Fécamp in search of a head-workman for the purpose of repairing some admirable old wainscots, banished to the loft by my predecessor. Returning quite late at night, I slept late in the morning, and I saw, from my window, this beautiful and charming woman, in close conversation with the wood-carver, who was beginning on his work in the open air, opposite the hall on the ground-floor. She was so simply dressed, that it needed attentive observation to recognize in her a woman of certain rank in the hierarchy of gentlewomen. I descended to the apartment that he was engaged in decorating; and when I saw the boot, the glove, and the cuff, I doubted no longer. It was a Parisian lady and a most refined person. I went out into the court; I saluted her on passing, and was not going to interrupt her investigation, when she approached me with a mixture of good-breeding and timidity which lent a great charm to her act.

"I ought," she said, "to beg pardon of the master of Bertheville (that is the name of my abbey) for the freedom with which I have entered the open gates of his domain."

"Pardon!" I replied, "when I should thank you for it!"

"That is very kind," she replied, with a playful simplicity that did not prevent her from coloring a little; "but I will not trespass on it. I

will withdraw, and, knowing that you are here, of which I was not yet aware, I will not permit myself again —"

"I will take my departure again, forthwith, if it interferes with your examining my work."

"I have finished. I came to ask directions on my own account."

I offered to give her what information lay in my power as proprietor, and she saw that my manner was perfectly serious and proper. She did not scruple to tell me that she had desired Saint Vandrille, but that she was dismayed by the expenditure necessary to render this ruin habitable. She had wished to learn from my head-workman the price of his work. There was at Saint Vandrille a very fine wainscot of this kind which also required a restoration.

I had already seen Saint Vandrille, but without making any calculation of its improvement. I proposed to go there that same day, and make a little study, accompanied with a rough estimate of the expense. She accepted my offer, thanking me warmly, but telling me that she would send for my study, and urging me not to bring it to her.

When she left me, I was a little bewildered by her beauty and her air of frankness; I recovered myself directly. I laughed at myself for my excessive civility, for I was about to lose a day and give myself considerable trouble for a person who did not care to see me again; but I had promised, and two hours later I was at Saint Vandrille. I found my beautiful neighbor there, who came and thanked me for my promptness.

In the mean time I had made inquiries about her. I learned that her name was Madame de Valdère; that she usually resided in Paris; that she had just hired a house close by me; that she lived absolutely alone with an old governess, a cook, and a servant, not knowing, and not yet wishing to know, any one in the neighborhood, passing her mornings in walking, and her evenings in embroidering or reading.

Saint Vandrille is, like Jumiéges, a vast ruin in a small enclosure. You know Jumiéges, doubtless. If you do not, figure to yourself the church of Saint Sulpice ruined and laid open in the midst of a pretty English garden, whose sanded alleys wind through fine grass-plots under open arches tapestried with ivy and garlanded with wild plants. The two monumental church towers rear their skeletons, white as old bones against the beautiful Norman sky, so rich in color when the sun pierces its mists. Countless birds of prey circle incessantly around these open turrets, whose carved border protects their nests, and send forth loud hoarse cries. Below the great walls of the uncovered nave grow magnificent trees and graceful bushes. In a remnant of the old buildings for religious service, the present owner, a man of taste and learning, has arranged himself a dwelling, still very large, and decorated in the best style. From fragments found in the ruins, he has made an interesting museum. It is a habitation at once stern, comfortable, and charming, fronting a splendid scenery enlivened and perfumed by a delightful vegetation

well ordered in its picturesque arrangement.

In examining Saint Vandrille, we spoke only of Jumiéges, whose adaptation was a masterpiece in my eyes, and might serve as a model for Madame de Valdère.

"I realize perfectly," she said to me, "that the acquisition of these historical monuments creates serious duties. To restore them is only in the power of princely fortunes, and I do not quite see where would be the benefit to art and science which have already sufficient archæological specimens still standing. Besides, I attach no value to what is almost entirely made over, with new materials and by hands which no longer possess the individuality of the past. When a ruin is truly a ruin, one should leave it its relative beauty, its lofty air of desertion, its marriage with the ivy that encroaches on it, and the solemnity of its associations. To preserve it from brutal devastation, to frame it with verdure and with flowers, is all one can and ought to do, and this part of my mission I should fulfil well enough, I believe; I love gardens and I possess a little knowledge of them; but the appropriation of my residence to this exacting neighborhood is what disquiets me; there is a species of slavery in this sort of property that terrifies me. One has no right to refuse admittance to amateurs, or even to the idle and indifferent. Hence one ceases to be at home; and what shall I do, I who am so fond of solitude, if I cannot walk among my ruins, without encountering there at every step English tourists or photogra-

phers? If we were close by Paris, one would have special days and hours to devote to the public; but here, has one a right to deny people who have come thirty or forty leagues to see a ruin of which you are, in reality, only the guardian or *cicerone*?"

To that I had nothing to reply. I knew by what thoughtless demands, by what rude returns, the inexhaustible civility of our neighbor of Jumiéges was too often repaid. I advised Madame de Valdère to build herself a *châlet* in the midst of the woods, and to think no more of Saint Vandrille.

I ought to have rested on this wise conclusion, to have abandoned my valuation, and taken leave of her; but the passion for archæology led me away. The church of Saint-Vandrille is finer and in many places better preserved than that of Jumiéges. The adjacent buildings are ugly and inconvenient; but there is a quadrangular garden which descends in terraces above smiling meadows; and this monastic garden, designed in ancient style, was a great temptation for my dreams of conscientious decoration. There was also an immense chapter-house there, quite entire, and completely surrounded by elegant arcades. From a great gallery which communicates with the refectory one penetrates into the vast structure. I saw myself again in the chapter-house of Saint Clément. I recalled the magisterial conference of the prince with his vassals, the hurried and mournful funeral of Marco; then, my hallucination following its bent, I believed I stood once more in the

immense library where we had acted tragedy before the chiefs of Montenegro. Again I saw Impéria singing and miming the *Marseillaise*, and, in a confusion of phantoms and fictions, Lambesq roaring the furies of Orestes, while I declaimed *Polyeucte*. The kind and pleasant face of Bellamare appeared to me from behind the scenes, whence the hollow voice of Moranbois gave us the cue. Tears sprang to my eyes, a nervous laugh choked me, and I cried involuntarily, "Ah! what a fine theatre!"

Madame de Valdère regarded me with emotion; she doubtless thought that I was mad; she grew pale and trembling.

I thought I must, to reassure her, make her the declaration that I am wont to throw at those who look at me with distrust and curiosity.

"I have been an actor," I said to her, forcing a smile.

"I know it well," she answered, still agitated. "I believe I am acquainted with your whole history. Do not be surprised at it, Monsieur Lawrence. I had a pretty little Renaissance house at Blois, No. 25, in a certain street where there were lindens and nightingales. There occurred in this house a singular adventure, of which you were the hero. The heroine, who went there without my knowledge or permission, although she was a friend of mine, confessed all to me afterwards. Poor woman, she died with this memory!"

"Died!" cried I. "Then I shall never see her!"

"So much the better for her, since you would not have loved her!"

I saw that Madame de Valdère

knew all. I pressed her with questions; she evaded them; this memory was painful to her, and she was in no wise disposed to betray the secret of her friend. I should never know her name, nor anything which would enable me to trace her in a past sealed up, buried irrevocably.

"You can at least," I said, "tell me of the feeling that she had for me. Was it serious?"

"Very serious, very deep, very lasting; you had not thought it?"

"No, and I probably missed happiness through distrust of happiness; but did she suffer from this love? Was it the cause —"

"Of her premature death? No. She had preserved her hope, or had recovered it, when she learned that you had left the stage. Perhaps she was about to attempt to regain your affections, when she died in consequence of an accident,—her ball-dress caught fire. She suffered greatly; she has been dead for two years. Let us talk no more of her, I beg of you; it gives me great pain."

"It pains me also," I replied, "and yet I wish to speak of her! Have a little courage, through pity for me."

She answered kindly that she sympathized with my regret, if it was real; but could it be? Should I not continue to scorn, beyond the tomb, a woman whom I had scorned when living? Was I disposed to listen with respect to what I might be told concerning her?

I assured her that I was.

"That is not sufficient," replied Madame de Valdère. "I wish to know your inmost feelings in this respect. Relate me your adventure

frankly, from your point of view. Tell me the judgment that you passed upon my friend, and all the reasons that led you to write that you adored her, to forget her afterward, and to return to the beautiful Impéria."

I faithfully related to her all that I have told you, without omitting anything. I confessed that there was, perhaps, a certain pique in my first impulse toward the unknown, and a second pique in my silence when she had doubted me.

"I was sincere," I told her; "I had loved Impéria, but I threw myself into a new love courageously, loyally, ardently. Your friend might have saved me; she was unwilling. I should never have seen Impéria again. I should have forgotten her without an afterthought or a regret. Nothing was easier for me at that time. The unknown showed herself jealous in a haughty way, whose cold generosity humiliated me profoundly. I feared a person exacting to the point of making it a crime in me to have loved another before knowing her, and mistress of herself to the point of concealing her disdain beneath benefits. I should have preferred an open jealousy; I should have found agitated words, heartfelt oaths, to reassure her. I foresaw terrible struggles, an invincible bitterness gathered in her heart. I was a craven in my pride. I renounced her! And then her position and mine were too unequal! Now, I should no longer be so timid and so easily offended. I should not fear to seem ambitious to her, and I should know how to conquer her

distrust ; but she exists no longer ; it was my destiny to be unfortunate in love. She did not know how much I might have loved her ; and I was rejected by Impéria, as if Heaven had wished to punish me for not having caught at happiness when it was offered me."

"Yes," replied Madame de Valdère, "in that respect you were very culpable toward yourself, and you cruelly misunderstood a woman as loyal and as sincere as yourself. My friend wrote in good faith when she offered you her assistance with Impéria. She was neither distrustful nor haughty. She was weighed down with grief ; she sacrificed herself. She was not perfect, but she had the utter candor of romantic souls ; in feeling a dread of her character, you committed, permit me to say, the greatest blunder that a man of judgment could commit. She possessed a gentleness that might degenerate into weakness, and you could have governed like a child this woman whom you fancied terrible."

"I was a child, myself," I answered, "and I was well punished for it !"

"Doubtless, since you recovered your love for Impéria, and that love became an incurable malady."

"What do you know of it ?" I exclaimed.

"I saw it at once, when you cried, 'There would be a fine theatre !' All your past of illusions, all your future of regrets, were written in your eyes ; you will never console yourself !"

It seemed to me like a direct reproach, for the eyes of this beautiful woman were moist and shining. I

caught her hand, without quite knowing what I did.

"Let us talk no more of either Impéria or the unknown," I said. "There has ceased to be a past for me ; why should there not be a future ?"

I perceived, to my surprise, that I was making her a declaration, and I made haste to add : "Let us talk of Saint Vandrille."

I offered her my arm to descend to the wild and deserted garden, and we did not talk of Saint Vandrille. We still returned to the unknown ; and I thought I could perceive that, by dint of talking of me and describing me to Madame de Valdère, she had excited in her a great curiosity to see me, perhaps a stronger interest than curiosity. My neighbor appeared to me, if not as adventurous as her friend, at least as romantic ; and I began to feel that it would be very easy to fall in love with her, if I was encouraged ever so little.

I was not, and I became more enamored. I had not dared to ask her to receive me ; she secluded herself so completely for some days, that I prowled in vain about her dwelling without perceiving her. It was then that the fancy occurred to me to transform my uncle's sleeping-room into a study, and to install my Penates in the square pavilion, which should become the blue chamber of Blois. From the moment that I knew the veritable designer of this pretty apartment, it gained a double interest for me, and I began to work at it from memory, with much enthusiasm. When, at the end of several days, it began to resemble

the original, I wrote to Madame de Valdère to beg her to give me some information and advice upon my premises. I had been so courteous to her, that she thought she could not refuse me. She came, was greatly surprised, greatly touched, even, by my sentimental fancy, and declared that my recollections were very faithful. She permitted me, then, to visit her, and showed me two letters to the unknown that the latter, on dying, had confided to her, telling her to burn them after she had read them.

"Why have you not done so?" I asked her.

"I don't know," she answered; "I have always dreamed that I should meet you somewhere, and could return them to you."

Still, she did not return them, and I had no motive to reclaim them. I asked her if she had not a portrait of her friend.

"No," she said, "and if I had one, I should not show it to you."

"Why? Her distrust continued; she forbade you, — so be it! I will love no more in the past; I have had enough of it; I have been unhappy enough to have expiated everything. I have a right to forget my long martyrdom."

"Still, the blue chamber?"

"The blue chamber, it is you," I answered. "It is you, designer and occupant of this room, that in this room I loved in fancy, before the apparition of your friend."

"Then that is likewise the past?"

"Why should it not be the present?"

She reproached me for coming to

her house to pay her empty compliments.

It was bad taste, I confessed, but what could she expect of a former stage-lover?

"Hush," said she, "you slander yourself! I know you very well; my friend had received letters enough from M. Bellamare to appreciate you; and I, who read those letters, know what you are. Do not hope to make me doubt."

"What am I, according to you?"

"A serious and delicate man, who will never lightly make love to a woman he esteems; a man who, for three years, concealed his affection from Impéria, because he respected her. Hence, a woman who respects herself and who knows that would not willingly accept flattery from you; confess it."

I did not then make love to Madame de Valdère; I do not now; but I see her often, and I love her. It seems to me that she loves me also. Perhaps I am a coxcomb; perhaps she has only friendship for me, like Impéria! It is, perhaps, my destiny to inspire friendship. It is sweet, it is pure, it is charming, but it is not sufficient. I begin to be irritated by this confidence in my loyalty, which is not as real as it appears, since it costs me a struggle. And this is where I am. A lover, timid and distrustful, impatient and fearful, because — because — must I tell you all? — I have as much fear of being loved as of not being loved. I see that I have to do with a thoroughly virtuous woman, who would not understand a transient love, when she can belong to me forever. I aspire

to the happiness of possessing such a wife, and loving her as I know that I am capable of loving. It only remains for me to give her this confidence by expressing a true passion to her; and there I have remained, for nearly two months, like a scholar, who fears to guess and who fears not to guess. Why, you will ask me—

“Yes,” cried I, “why, say why, my dear Lawrence! Confess yourself entirely.”

“Ah heavens,” replied he, rising, and walking agitatedly about the blue chamber, “because I have contracted in my wandering life a very serious chronic malady; the unattainable desire, the fancy for the impossible, weariness of the real, the ideal without definite object, the thirst for what is not and cannot be! What I dreamed of at twenty I dream of still. What fled from my grasp I seek still in the empty air.”

“The artist’s glory! is it that?”

“Perhaps! I had, unconsciously, some unsatisfied ambition. I thought myself modest, because I wished to be so; but my wounded vanity has preyed upon me, like those diseases that you do not perceive and that kill you. Yes, it must be that! I could have wished to be a great artist, and I am only an intelligent critic. I am too cultivated, too logical, too philosophic, too reflective; I have not been inspired. I shall do very well a little of everything. I shall be a master in nothing. It is a torture to comprehend the beautiful, to have analyzed it, to know in what it consists, how it unfolds, develops, and manifests itself, and not

be able to produce it from one’s self. It is like love, you see! you feel it, you touch it, you think to seize it; it escapes you, it flees you. You stand before the memory of an ardent dream and of a cold deception!”

“Impéria!” I said, “it is Impéria! You think of her still!”

“Imperia insensible, and my ambition disappointed, it is all one,” he answered. “These two first elements of vitality are the starting-point of my life. I wasted the three best years of my youth in seeing them elude me day by day, hour by hour. Perhaps I shall gain preferable blessings; but what I shall not recover is my boy’s heart, my obstinate hope, my blind confidence, my poet aspirations, my days of carelessness, and my days of fever. All that is over, over! I am a grown man, and I love a grown woman. I am excellent; she is adorable; we could be very happy. I am rich as a nabob and lodged like a prince. From a straw-filled pallet I pass to a bed of gold and silk. I can gratify all my whims; get drunk on wine bottled these hundred years; have a harem better established and better concealed than that of Prince Klémenti. Still, better than he, I can have a theatre, a hired troupe; my uncle made me a grant of one hundred thousand francs like that of the Odéon! I shall have art for my money, as I have poetry by right of inheritance; a beautiful nature, where I prune and plant to my liking. See, is it not a romantic site?” added he, drawing aside the heavy curtain from the window, and showing me the landscape through the clear glass, frost-dia-

monded at the edge. "Look out! I do not like blinds. Nothing is sweeter than to look from one's fire-side at the white frost without. The snow falls now only in light flakes, that the moon softly silvers. Farther on, below my park, the Seine, broad as an arm of the sea, flows peaceful and mighty. Those tall black cedars that frame the background let the masses of snow that drape their branches glide noiselessly upon the snow that drapes their feet. It is a beautiful scene, deliciously lighted! It is grand and solemn; it is mute as a churchyard, it is dead as I! — O Impéria!"

As he uttered this name, in an agonized voice that made the Loves of Saxony porcelain and the Bohemian glasses vibrate on the consoles, he stamped his foot like a necromancer who summons a rebellious spirit; all vibrated afresh, and all grew still again. He struck a blow that shivered to atoms a whole *étagère*, loaded with precious trifles. Then he began to laugh, saying with a bitter coolness, "Pay no attention; I often need to break something!"

"Lawrence, my dear Lawrence," I answered, "your malady is more serious than I thought. It is not an affectation, I see. You suffer much, and you are curing it in the wrong way. You must quit this solitude, you must travel, but with a companion. You must marry Madame de Valdère, and depart with her."

"If it concerned only myself," he replied, "I should not hesitate, for she pleases me, and I am sure that she is tender and devoted; but if I did not render her happy, if my sad-

ness and my irregularities should afflict and distress her! At present she longs only to cure me of the past. I have ceased to conceal anything from her; she requires it. All that I tell you she hears; all that I let you see she sees; all that I suffer she knows. She questions me, she studies me, she makes me relate all the details of my past and present life. She is interested in it; she pities, consoles, chides, and pardons me. She is an angelic friend; she thinks she cures me, and I submit; and I imagine that she cures me, and I feel that she calms me. She is not too much disturbed by my relapses. She has an unheard-of patience! Ah well, yes, she is necessary to me, and I could no longer do without the balm she instils into my wounds. But I fear lest my love may be selfish, odious perhaps! For if they came to knock at my door, saying, 'Bellamare is below with Impéria; they have come for you to play at Caudebec or Yvetot,' I feel that I should rush down like a madman, that I should leap with tears of joy into their carriage, and that I should go with them to the end of the world. With this madness in my brain, would you have me swear to a loving woman to live only for her? What would be her humiliation and despair to have brooded so tenderly over this tame dove's egg, whence should escape a wild pigeon! No, I am not yet ready for marriage; you must not bid me hasten. I must have time to bury myself, and come to life again, if the thing is possible!"

He was right. We separated at three o'clock in the morning; I must

absolutely leave at seven; but I promised him to despatch my affairs, and return to pass a week with him.

I had been at Duclair for two days, and I was breakfasting alone at the hotel table, not having been able to reach it at the accustomed hour, when I saw a man enter who was still young, that is to say, not very young, and not very handsome, that is, quite ugly, but whose salutation, glance, and smile prepossessed me in his favor. He seated himself opposite me, and ate hastily, without seeming to notice what they brought him, consulting a note-book meanwhile. I took him for a commercial traveller. Something at once lively, facetious, and kindly about him made me wish that he might address me; but he appeared too well bred to begin the conversation at random, and I resolved to anticipate him, by asking, what I knew very well, at what hour the steamer passed for Havre.

"I believe," he answered, "that it passes at two o'clock."

These few words were like a flash of light to me; he spoke through his nose! A vague revelation was already occurring to me, unconsciously. I wished to ask him his name, when I saw him draw up an inkstand, and write the address on a letter that he had taken from his pocket. I thoughtlessly cast my eyes upon this letter, and I read there, "For Monsieur Pierre Lawrence, Arvers."

"Permit me," I said to him. "By some unaccountable absence of mind, I have just looked at the name you are writing, and I believe I ought to give you a direction. Lawrence is no longer at Arvers."

He regarded me with a piercing glance, raising his eyes without lifting his head; and having assured himself that he had never seen me, but that I had an honest face, he requested me to be so kind as to give him Lawrence's new address.

"They call him Baron Lawrence here, but he does not like to have them give him this title, which he has not inherited in a direct line. He lives at his château, the château of his late uncle, at some hours' distance from here."

"He has inherited then?"

"Effectually; he has one hundred thousand francs a year."

"How he will laugh at my letter! No matter; have the goodness to tell me the name of the château."

"Bertheville."

"Ah! true, I remember," said the man, gayly, with a broad smile. "What a stroke of luck! That dear boy! so he is rich and happy! He well deserved it!"

"He is not perhaps so happy as you think, Monsieur Bellamare."

"Ah! so you know me then?"

"You see I do!"

"And him?"

"He is my friend."

"Oh! then — I know that you are inspector of finance, they told me so at this inn — you will have the goodness to take charge of that, a note of five thousand francs that I have owed him for some years. I know that he will dispense with the interest."

"And with the amount also. I assure you that he will not receive it! No matter, I know your delicacy. I will remit your money to him. Where shall I tell him to return it?"

"I will not have him return it to me. If he is rich he should be generous; there are poorer poor than I and my actors; but could I not see him? Has he forgotten his old friend, his old director? Lawrence had one of those hearts that cannot change."

"Dear Monsieur Bellamare, he would receive you only too gladly; but ought you to rekindle the fire that lurks beneath the ashes?"

"What do you mean?"

"May I ask if Mademoiselle Impéria is still a member of your society?"

"Impéria? Yes, certainly! I expect her in an hour, with the rest of my company."

"Léon, Moranbois, Anna, and Lambesq?"

"Ah well, you know us all?"

"Lawrence has told me all the chief particulars of his life. Have you still Lucinde and Régine?"

"No, they did not accompany me to America, where we have been passing the last two years, organizing, from time to time, around our little nucleus, troupes to reinforce us; but my five associates have never left me."

"And Purpurin continues in your service?"

"Always; he will die with me! Poor Purpuin!"

"What then?"

"O, we have truly had adventures; it is our fate; among others an encounter with savages converted by the missionaries and civilized, who wished to scalp us. Purpurin left them some of his hair, together with the skin. We arrived there in season

to rescue the rest. He recovered; but this little operation and the terror he experienced have not effected a perceptible improvement in his intellect. He has been forced to renounce his claims, which, after all, is not an evil. But tell, then, of Lawrence. Does he still care for Impéria?"

"More than ever."

"The deuse!"

"She never loved him?"

"Indeed, I believe she did."

"And at present."

"She denies, as always."

"Why?"

"Ah! there it is, why? I cannot tell you; perhaps dread of a life which would not suit her tastes and her theatrical habits."

"But now that he is wealthy —"

"Would he marry her now?"

"I am certain of it!"

Bellamare grew very pale, and walked in an agitated way the length of the table.

"To lose Impéria," he said, "is to lose all, for she has great ability now, and, by her friendship, her devotion, her intelligence, she is the nerve, she is the soul, of all our existences. To separate from her is to break us all up, and as for myself —"

He paused, choked by an inward sob that he repressed, walking again about the room.

"Listen to me," I said; "I am no more of the opinion that he should marry Mademoiselle de Valclos than you are. The unknown of Blois is dead, but —"

"Dead? What a pity!"

"But she has left a friend, a confidant, who loves Lawrence, who

lives near him, and whom Lawrence would marry, if he could forget Impéria. I am convinced that this marriage would be much more suitable for both — ”

“Tell me, then,” said Bellamare, interrupting me with a preoccupied air, “how long has Madame de Valdère been dead?”

“Madame de Valdère?”

“Ah yes, her name escaped me; but what difference does that make now, since the poor unknown is no longer in the world? Her romance was so pure, she was so excellent, so virtuous, and so good a woman! You are not a man to betray that secret?”

“No, surely; but I do not understand what you say at all. Madame de Valdère is by no means dead; it is she who is the neighbor, the friend, the confidant, almost the betrothed of Lawrence.”

“Ah well! — I am indeed — No, stay! Have you seen her, this neighbor?”

“Not yet. I know that she is tall, beautiful — ”

“And very blond?”

“No, fair, with brown hair, according to what Lawrence has told me.”

“O, hair! one has that whatever color one desires. Her first name?”

“Jeanne.”

“It is she! a widow? without children? quite wealthy? twenty-eight or thirty years of age?”

“Yes, yes, yes! Lawrence has told me all that.”

“Ah well, it is she; depend upon it, it is she! And Lawrence does not suspect that the friend of his un-

known is his unknown herself, who represents herself as dead? That boy will always be simple and modest to the verge of blindness! O, that changes the situation indeed, my dear monsieur! Lawrence is a man of imagination. When he learns the truth, he will love again the one he loved under romantic circumstances. He will love the unknown; he will forget Impéria.”

“And that will be better for him, for her, for Impéria, and for you all.”

“Yes, certainly! Madame de Valdère must be warned that her feint has lasted long enough, and that she ought to reveal herself to Lawrence, because there is danger in delay, because Impéria has returned. As for me, I have not yet announced myself anywhere. The provincial journals have not printed my name. Landed at Havre two days since, I wished to gain Rouen without performing on the way. I will do still better, pass unrecognized, fire Rouen, and go to perform as far off as possible. You will not tell Lawrence of our meeting, you will not speak of me; he may think me for several months yet in Canada. Make him marry Madame de Valdère within some weeks, and all is safe.”

“Then you must depart quickly; Lawrence may come to see me here, where he often comes. He may make his appearance at any moment. What would you do in that case?”

“I should tell him that Impéria had remained in America, married to a millionaire.”

“But might she not appear at the same moment? Have you not told me that you expected her?”

"Yes, we were to stop here ; I had some one to see in the neighborhood, a friend who does not expect me, who will not know that I have passed. I am going to meet my troupe, so that it shall not enter this town. Adieu ! Thanks ! Permit me to shake your hand, and escape with all speed."

"Take back your money," I said, "since Lawrence must not know of our interview. You have time to settle this account with him."

"That is true ; adieu once more."

"Do you forbid me to accompany you ? I confess that I have a foolish wish to see Moranbois, Léon —"

"That is to say, Impéria. Well, come, you shall see them all, but do not mention Lawrence to them."

"That is understood."

I took my hat, and we both set out for the country. Bellamare, seeing the keeper of a livery-stable, stopped him, and bargained with him for a great omnibus, to which the horses were hastily harnessed. We sprang into it, and took the road to Caudebec.

"This omnibus," he said to me, "will receive my company and my luggage, and they will be conveyed to our destination without our having to return to the town. I will tell my companions that the friend I wished to see at Duclair no longer lives there, that the inn is ~~bad~~ and dear, and we will be off directly for Rouen, by way of Barentin, where we take the train."

After quarter of an hour's riding, during which time I had thoroughly enlightened Bellamare as to the state of mind in which I had left Lawrence, we hailed another omnibus,

which carried the *society*. Bellamare prepared to give them the proposed explanations, and I busied myself in assisting the removal of the women and baggage, to have an opportunity of seeing all the characters of Lawrence's *roman comique*, who interested me strongly.

The first woman who sprang lightly and carelessly into the street, still covered with snow, was the little Impéria. She was very small and very thin, in fact, this woman who had played so prominent a part in my friend's life. With her close-fitting travelling-dress, her hair rolled back under her little cap of false astrakan, she looked like a little school-girl going home for the holidays, but, on observing her more attentively, I saw that she was really thirty, and that she had lost all freshness. In spite of her pure and regular features, she did not seem to me pretty. The blond, Anna, was a trifle stout to play the girlish rôles, and her cheeks, marbled by the cold, were of a very sorry color. Moranbois, entirely bald, and still wearing a cap of otter-skin, found occasion to answer me roughly when I offered to help him, in carrying a great chest, which proved that the strength of the Hercules had not diminished, in spite of time, travels, and adventures. Léon, very pale, and too closely shaved, appeared to me a man worn out and ill. He was of a distinguished type, and his extreme politeness contrasted with the rudeness of Moranbois. Lambesq was fat and ugly ; he walked sideways like a crab, and complained of still feeling the rolling of the water in his legs.

Purpurin, scalped, wore a false top-piece, taken, without doubt, from the stage properties, and of a shade that did not match his hair. Truly, they were not handsome, these poor strolling actors who had seemed to me so interesting and peculiar through the narrative of Lawrence. I had leisure to examine them while Moranbois, who kept the accounts, quarrelled with the drivers, threatening them with one arm, and carrying Anna's chubby baby with the other. Impéria went up to Bellamare, who was anxious about her, and assured him, with a decided and lively air, that she was well and very happy to see the earth and trees, even leafless trees, after eighteen days on the water. She admired Normandy; she decidedly preferred the North to warm countries. In short, she talked near me for some moments, and I understood her charm and her power. When she spoke, she was transfigured; her tired, drawn features regained their elasticity. Her thinness disappeared; the transparent softness of her skin assumed a peculiar tint, half-way between marble and life. She had still magnificent teeth, and her eyes gained a penetrating brilliancy which might well become irresistible. She was one of those who do not strike, but fascinate.

Bellamare, also, looked younger to me than when I had first seen him; in a few moments, Léon produced the same impression. I attributed it to the result of a life of nervous over-excitement. Such people have no age. They always appear younger or older than they are. When I saw

them depart, it seemed as if I should like to follow them to study them more closely, and then I was touched by the thought of their poverty and their honesty. They had, apparently, no means to pay for their carriage, and they returned five thousand francs to Lawrence!

I went back to the inn, where Lawrence himself awaited me. How little he suspected the thunderbolt which had just passed so near him! This morning his thoughts were taken up with Madame de Valdère. She had appeared sad and dejected since our recent interview. It was because, agitated by his confidences with me, he had allowed her to see an increase of melancholy. Now he feared lest she was secretly preparing to fly from him forever. He was angry and distressed.

"Women," said he, "have only pride; no true pity!"

He entreated me to take up my abode with him. I was engaged only for some hours in the day. He promised to carry me and bring me back every day in a conveyance swift as the wind.

"It is truly a pleasure," I said when returning with him to Bertheville in a carriage as elastic as a bow, drawn by three admirable horses, harnessed abreast; "it is a real pleasure, thus to fly over the snow and ice, with the feet on an excellent boiler and the knees enveloped in a silky fur."

"With a friend beside one," he said, pressing my hand; "to be there alone is pleasure for a prince, and I was born a peasant. The jolts of a cart, joggled along by an old mule,

are better for the health. At present, I can neither eat nor sleep. Fate is a fool who is always in error, loading those who ask nothing of her, and disappointing those who invoke her."

That evening he took me to the house of Madame de Valdère, and presented me as his only friend.

"Only ? are Bellamare, Léon, and the others dead ?" she asked in an agitated voice.

"It is all the same, at present," replied Lawrence. "I have not thought of them, all day, and I see no reason why the days that follow should not be like this."

Madame de Valdère turned away to serve the tea, but I saw a ray of joy upon her beautiful features. Lawrence had not exaggerated her attractions ; her beauty, her freshness, the perfection of her form, the impressive charm of her countenance, were undeniable ; her hair was naturally brown. Later, when I asked her why it had appeared blond to Lawrence and Bellamare, she told me that at that period she had had for some time a fancy for gold-powder, which was just coming in fashion. This circumstance had helped to disguise her in Lawrence's memory.

I saw in an instant that she loved him distractedly and absolutely. I desired to be alone with her, but that was impossible, without Lawrence's observing it. I resolved to write to her forthwith. While sketching in an album, I traced these words which I handed to her stealthily : "I cannot dispose of your secret without your consent. Tell the truth to Lawrence. It is necessary !"

She went out to read it, and returned a little confused. She had not the self-possession and experience of her age ; she had still the emotion and candor of her early youth ; Lawrence was her first, her only love.

She asked him for a book that he had promised to bring her. He had forgotten it. He pretended to have left it in the pocket of his overcoat, and went out as if to bring it from the anteroom ; but he left the house, dashed out on foot through the snow and night, and ran home to get it. We heard him go out.

"We are alone," Madame de Valdère said to me ; "speak quickly."

I told her all that had transpired during the day.

"So," she said, "they are gone ? Impéria will not see him, she will not know that she is still beloved, that he is rich, that she can render him happy ! I cannot accept that. I will not owe Lawrence to a surprise, to a lie, for silence would be one. If he still loves Mademoiselle de Valclos, my fate must be fulfilled. There is still time ; he has promised me nothing ; I have made him no avowal ; I have given him no right over my life. I will depart, you shall bring Bellamare's company here ; and if this trial does not drive me from the heart of Lawrence, I will return. Tell him at once that he can rejoin them at Rouen. He will go, I am certain of it. As for me, I shall withdraw until I know my fate. Whatever it may be, I shall endure it with courage and dignity."

She burst into tears. In vain I opposed her resolution. However, I made her promise that Lawrence

should know his unknown before being subjected to the decisive trial. I persuaded her to go and put on gold-dust and a black mantle, that she might appear as he had seen her in the blue room.

When she returned, blond and veiled, I made her turn her back to the door where Lawrence would re-enter and I withdrew. I met him all out of breath, bringing the volume. I told him that I was seized with a violent headache, and that his neighbor had permitted me to retire.

He returned very late ; I had gone to bed. He came to throw himself upon my neck ; he was intoxicated with love and happiness. Bellamare had not been deceived. The man of imagination had resumed his normal existence. He adored two women in Madame de Valdère, — the unknown, who had haunted his dreams ; the friend, who had generously labored to effect his cure. He wished to marry her the next day. He would have done so had the thing been possible.

Had she informed him of Impéria's return ? He said not a word about it to me, and I dared not question him. I confess that, on seeing Lawrence's intoxication, and hearing him make the plans of a millionaire lover who wishes to lavish all upon his idol, I thought, with a certain oppression at the heart, of the poor little actress who went away without gloves, and almost without cloak, over the snowy road in pursuit of a cruel profession, with her talent, her nerve, her will, her forced smiles and tears, for all capital, for

all future. Hitherto I had pitilessly worked in behalf of her rival. I surprised myself thinking the latter too easily happy. Left alone, I could not sleep again. Some anxiety preyed upon me, and I asked myself if I had been right in acting as I had done.

I dressed myself, and, as I contemplated a fine winter sunrise from my window, I saw in the court-yard a man wrapped in a goat-skin coat, and wearing a woollen cap, who resembled a bargeman of the Seine, and who was making signs to me. I went down, and, approaching him, I recognized Bellamare.

"Show me," he said "to the house of Madame de Valdère. I must speak to her unknown to Lawrence. I know that he went to bed late ; we shall have time. I will tell you on the way what brings me."

I pointed out the path ; I ran to put on another coat and rejoined him.

"You see," said he, "I have retraced my steps. At Barentin I embarked all my company for Rouen. I journeyed all night in a wretched stage-wagon ; but I was tormented, I was feverish, I did not feel the cold. I had resolved to perform a bad act, a cowardice, through selfishness ! I cannot carry it out. It would be the first of my life. Impéria has always sacrificed herself for her friends. She might have been engaged at Paris, had a great success there, and made a fortune, or at least have found an easy and comfortable existence there. There is more than one belonging to the Théâtre Français who does not equal her.

She refused, in order not to leave us. You know how she acted, when she was overwhelmed with the gifts of Prince Klémenti and his guests. You have divined that in refusing Lawrence's love, it was still that she wished to devote herself to us. That cannot last forever. She is thirty now. She is weak, exhausted. Our little company will never make a fortune; our life will be a perpetual drag. Some years more still laughing and singing, she will succumb to illness; that is how we finish!—and here she can have a hundred thousand francs a year, and an excellent, charming husband, who still loves her, who will be happy in making her happy. And I should conceal it from her! No, I ought not, I will not. I will see Madame de Valdère, for I swore to her formerly to serve her cause. She must know that I abandon it, that I ought to abandon it. She is a woman of very large heart, I know. I met her more than once after the adventure of Blois, and I had always that I could give her hope. All is changed since the time when Impéria rejected Lawrence with a grief that it was impossible to hide from me. At that time we were leaving for America. I did not see the Countess then. She was travelling. I did not know where to write her. She must know all, and, in her supreme delicacy, she must pronounce. As for me, there is one thing certain, I cannot deceive Impéria, and I will not. After that let these two women dispute the heart of my former young *premier*, or let the more generous yield him to the other; it is no longer

my affair. I shall have done my duty."

I was too much of Bellamare's opinion to contradict him. We had Madame de Valdère awakened. She listened to us weeping, and remained powerless, speechless, irresolute, defenceless. She was weak but admirable, for she uttered not a word of complaint. She thought only of Lawrence's happiness, and concluded thus: "I know that he loves me, I am sure of it now. He told me so yesterday, with a passion so convincing that I should not respect him if I doubted it; but he has been sick in mind and heart so long a time, that I shall not be surprised to see him escape me again. I have no right to rebel against this decree of fate. I accepted him in advance, when I came to establish myself near him, with the intention of making him love me for myself, without fiction or poetry. In passing myself off as a friend of the unknown, my object was to know and understand thoroughly the feeling he had had for her. I saw that this love was nothing more than a transient emotion, a chapter in the wandering romance of his life, although he spoke of her with respect and gratitude. I feared then to appear too romantic myself to him by revealing my secret, and, in order to give him that confidence in me which he had lacked in her, I showed him that I knew how to be an unselfish, generous, and tender friend. He realized it; but this friendship was still too new to banish the memory of Impéria. I felt it; I saw it. I wished to wait still, to preserve myself free toward him, to render my

affection necessary to him, and to confess the past to him only on giving him the future. I was forced yesterday to betray myself. He was excited, intoxicated; and I, I was cowardly, I could not resolve to tell him that Impéria was so near him. You come this morning to tell me that I must complete the trial. Ah well, you crush me. I was so happy in seeing him happy at my feet! No matter, you are right. I will do what you wish."

And again she wept openly, and as if from a full heart. She made Bellamare weep.

"Come, my dear madame," I said to her, "I am not very impressible, and not at all romantic, and yet I feel that you are an angel, the good angel of Lawrence probably; but, in your interest, ought we to expose you to some reproach in the future, if he discovers the truth in three respects, which are, that Impéria has returned, that she is free, and that she perhaps loves him? Do you not fear that in a day of nervous discomfort, a rainy day in the country, one of those days when one would commit a crime without a reason, he may complain of us all for our silence, and of you in particular?"

"It is not a question of myself," she said; "do not think of me! I have a faithful and reflective, not an exuberant, nature. I waited for a long time, and for a long time I lived in a dream that faded and revived alternately; I travelled; I improved myself; I grew calm; I even formed other plans; and if I could love no other man than Lawrence, it was against my will. I desired to forget

him. Whatever happens to me, I will not kill myself, and I will keep myself from violent despair. I shall still have had three months of happiness in my life, and the few hours of pure and perfect joy last night. What it concerns us to know, what I absolutely will know, is which of us, Impéria or I, will give most happiness to Lawrence."

"And how shall we know it?" said Bellamare, who was plunged again into his perplexity. "Who can read the future? The one who will make him the happiest will be the one who will love him most."

"No," replied Madame de Valdère, "for she who will love him best will be the one who will sacrifice herself. Listen, we must be extricated from this dilemma; I will see Impéria; she shall explain herself. I have a right to preserve Lawrence from a new grief, if she loves him but little or not at all."

"How will you arrange all that without his knowledge?" said Bellamare. "Is he not with you every day?"

"I have, at this moment, complete dominion over him. He entreated me yesterday to fix the day of our marriage. I will send him to Paris for my papers. I will warn my notary, by a telegraphic despatch, to make him wait for them several days. Go and bring Impéria from Rouen, and give me your word that you will tell her nothing yet. It is from me, from me alone, that she should learn the truth."

Bellamare gave his word, and departed on the instant. I went to arouse Lawrence, who hastened di-

ectly to the house of her whom he already called his betrothed and with whom he was already madly in love. She had the courage to conceal her agitation and her terror from him, and seem to yield to his impatience. That evening he departed for Paris.

In the night the train which took him to Rouen must have met that which brought Bellamare and Impéria to Barentin.

The latter arrived on the following morning. I awaited them at Madame de Valdère's, ready to withdraw when they approached.

"No," she said to me; "Impéria does not know you, and would be embarrassed to explain herself before you; but I am extremely anxious that you should give an account, a minute and faithful account, of this interview to Lawrence. Pass into my boudoir, from which you can hear everything. Listen to us; take notes, if necessary. I insist upon it."

I obeyed. Impéria entered alone. Bellamare, not wishing to impede the confidences of the two women, ascended to an apartment that had been prepared for him. Madame de Valdère received Impéria, extending both hands to her and embracing her.

"M. Bellamare," she said, "must have forewarned you somewhat?"

"He told me," responded Impéria in her clear and steady voice, "that a charming, good, beautiful, and accomplished lady had seen me formerly upon the stage, — I know not where! — and had deigned to take a liking to me; that this lady, knowing that I was in the vicinity, desired to make an important communication to me. I placed reliance on it, and I came."

"Yes," replied Madame de Valdère, "you were right. I have a great esteem for you; but you are tired, it is perhaps too soon —"

"No, madame, I am never tired."

"You are cold."

"I am inured to all."

"Take a cup of chocolate that I have had prepared for you."

"I see tea also. I should prefer it."

"I will serve you; pray, pray permit me. Poor child! how hard is this life you lead for so delicate a person!"

"I have never complained of it."

"Still, you were reared in comfort, in luxury even. I know your birth."

"As you are kind we will not talk of that; I never speak of it myself."

"I know it; but I have a right to put one question to you. If you should be wealthy again, would you not gladly leave the stage?"

"No, madame, never."

"It is a passion then?"

"Yes, a passion."

"Exclusive of any other?"

Impéria kept silence.

"Pardon me," continued Madame de Valdère, in a still more agitated voice, "I am indiscreet; I am doomed to be so. My duty is to question you, to obtain your confidence without reserve. If you refuse me — But do you not see that you would be wrong, that I am a sincere person? Stay! do not think my object is to convert you; it concerns a very different matter! I am the devoted friend of a man who loved you deeply, and who, now very rich and free from every tie, could love you again."

"You speak of Lawrence, madame; I learned yesterday, from the conversation of people in the carriage with me, that the former actor had inherited a great fortune."

"Ah well?"

"Ah well, what? I rejoiced for him."

"And for yourself?"

"For myself? is that what you wish to know? Well, no, madame, I did not think of myself."

"You never loved him then?" cried Madame de Valdère, who could not conceal her joy.

"I loved him tenderly, and his memory will always be dear to me," replied Impéria, firmly; "but I did not wish to become his wife."

"Why? Have you retained the prejudices of rank?"

"I never had them."

"Are you really engaged?"

"In my own eyes, yes."

"You are so still?"

"Always."

The Countess could no longer contain herself; she clasped Mademoiselle de Valclos in her arms.

"I see madame," said the latter, "that you take an interest in me of which I am not the principal object. Permit me to reassure you entirely, and to tell you that really and truly another affection separates me forever from Lawrence."

"Ah well, save him, save me, wholly. See him and tell him so."

"Why should I? I told him so seriously when we met at Clermont for the last time?"

"But you wept then; he thought that you loved him."

"He told you that?"

"It was M. Bellamare who told me."

"Ah yes; Bellamare thinks, also, that I loved him!"

"And that you love him still?"

"He will soon be undeceived; but tell me, madame, if my reply had been opposite to what it has been, what would you have done?"

"My dear child, I had taken a great resolution, and I should have kept it. I should have gone away, without reproach, without weakness, and without resentment against you."

"You are the unknown of Blois!"

"Bellamare has told you?"

"No, I guess it."

"It is I, in fact; by what do you recognize me?"

"By your generosity! This is not the first time that you have been ready to act thus. Did you not write to Bellamare? Did you not charge him to speak to me from you?"

"Yes. He did so?"

"He did it without telling me your name, which I have only learned to-day. In the carriage where I heard of Lawrence's brilliant position, some one said, 'He will marry his neighbor, Madame de Valdère.' So be happy without scruple and without alarm, dear madame. I heard it with great pleasure. I love Lawrence like a brother."

"Swear it, dear child, it was as a brother that you wept for him."

"I see that my tears will remain upon your mind; my confidence must respond to your own. You shall know all in few words, for you are familiar with my whole life, except the secret history of my feelings."

"Tell me, tell me all!" cried **Madame de Valdère**.

Impéria reflected for a moment, and thus related her history.

"You know how and why I entered the theatre. Lawrence must have told you. I wished to support my father, and, in spite of all the changes of my life, I succeeded in giving him, until his last day, as much comfort as he could appreciate in the state of mild insanity to which he was reduced. I went to see him every year; he did not recognize me; but I assured myself that he lacked for nothing, and became tranquil again. It was **M. Bellamare** who enabled me to perform this duty, and it is of **M. Bellamare** that I am going to speak to you. When, for the first time, I went to him secretly to ask him to make me an actress, he was not a stranger to me. He had come to organize and direct a play to be performed by children and intimate friends that we were preparing at **Valclos** for my poor father's birthday. I was twelve years old. **Bellamare** was still young. His pleasant ugliness diverted me at first; then his wit, his kindness, his tender grace with the children, captivated my childish heart and took possession of it forever."

"What!" cried **Madame de Valdère**, "it is **Bellamare** whom you love? Is it possible?"

"It is he," answered **Mademoiselle de Valclos**, firmly; "it is this poor man who has always been ugly, who will soon be old, and who will always remain poor. Look at me; I shall soon be like him; time has well

effaced the differences! When I was twelve he was thirty, and my eyes did not reckon. When he made me rehearse my part and study my gestures, and when he paternally encouraged me, by telling me that I was a born artist, I was filled with a great pride, and the memory of the man who had uttered the sentence of my destiny impressed itself upon my mind like the touch of a mysterious spirit come from another sphere to warn me of my vocation. The day when he left **Valclos** the little boys whom he had taught to act in our performance threw themselves upon his neck. He was so kind, so gay, he governed them so well while he amused them, that all adored them. He came to me and said, 'Mademoiselle Jane, do not be afraid! I shall not ask permission to kiss you. I am too ugly and you are too pretty. But my hand is not so ugly as my face; will you put your little hand into it?'

"I was touched; his hand was very beautiful. I forgot his face, I threw my arms about his neck and kissed him on both cheeks. His face felt soft and smooth; he was always very careful of his person. From that moment he never seemed ugly to me.

"When he had gone they talked of him considerably at our house. My father, who was an accomplished and very literary man, had the highest opinion of **Bellamare's** intellect and character. He treated him as a man of culture, and considered him a genuine artist. **Bellamare** had great success in our province, where he was then playing. My parents

often attended these performances. I persuaded them one day to let me accompany them. He acted Figaro. He wore a rich costume in the part, was full of vivacity, elegance, and grace; he appeared charming to me. His very defects, his bad voice, pleased me. It was impossible to separate his physical disadvantages from his good qualities. They applauded him passionately. I was exalted by his success. They permitted me to throw him a bouquet, whose ribbon bore these words, 'Little Jane to her professor.' He raised the bouquet to his lips, looking at me tenderly. I was intoxicated with pride. My little cousins shared my excitement; they knew the celebrated actor, the applauded, triumphant artist! They had performed with him; they had called him 'thou,' he had addressed them gravely as 'My dear comrades.' They could not be prevented from going to embrace him in the greenroom, between the acts. He handed them a photograph for me which represented him in his pretty costume of Figaro, and he said to them, 'You will tell your cousin to look at this phiz, when she has some little trouble; it will make her wish to laugh again.'

"He was far from grotesque in this rôle, and the photograph had chanced to flatter him. I received it with pride; I guarded it with a religious care; not only did I cease to think him ugly, but I thought him handsome.

"Love is more precocious with young girls than is supposed; I was still a child; I felt no agitation of the senses, but my imagination was

invaded by a type, and my heart swayed by a preference. I made no mystery of it; I was too innocent for that. They felt no anxiety about it; they attached no importance to it; and as they spoke of Bellamare only to praise his honor, his talent, his literary attainments, his good breeding, and the charm of his conversation, nothing combated my ideal.

"When the age of reason came, I talked no longer of him, but I dreamed of being an actress and did not plume myself upon it. Every year we acted a new play to celebrate my father's birthday. Bellamare was no longer there, but I strove to act better and better. They considered me remarkable; I believed myself to be so; I rejoiced at it. I cared only for dramatic literature. I learned and knew by heart all the classic repertory. I even wrote very silly little plays, and I composed grand verses, very awkward, doubtless, but which my kind father thought admirable. He encouraged my taste and suspected nothing.

"You know under what mournful circumstances I sought Bellamare, to confide my misfortunes and my schemes to him. In this secret interview I saw that he was profoundly agitated; at first sight he had appeared to me much older. His softened and brilliant glance rejuvenated him at once in my eyes. It was there that I first became conscious of the sentiment with which he inspired me, and I had a thrill of terror when I thought that he might read my feelings.

"He would have loved me, loved

me passionately, I know, now that I have seen him love other women; but his love was a flash that disappeared as suddenly as it came. Bellamare is the true artist of another time, with all the ardent qualities, all the frank eccentricities, all the impulses, all the weariness, that result from a life of carelessness and over-excitement. He would have loved me and forsaken me, aided and assisted me, but forgotten me like the others. Had I fixed his affections, he could not have married me; he was married already.

"I did not divine all this at our first meeting; but I distrusted myself, and, recovering my self-possession, I showed such firmness and seriousness, that he speedily changed in face and accent. He swore to be my father; he has kept his word.

"And as for me, I have always loved him, although he has caused me much suffering, by leading the life of a man of pleasure before my eyes; never speaking of his adventures, — he has too much reserve and modesty, — but not always able to conceal his emotions. There were quite long intervals, when I believed that I loved him no longer, and congratulated myself on never having confided my secret to any one. My pride, too often wounded, is the very simple cause of my invincible discretion. If I had confessed the truth to Lawrence, or to any other, I should have seen them laugh bitterly at my folly. I could not resolve to be ridiculous. My silence and the persistency of my affection have prevented me from being so. Bellamare, not suspecting the nature of my attachment,

has never entertained wrong feelings toward me.

"One sole disturbance was produced in the equilibrium that I maintained. The love of Lawrence troubled me and made me suffer. I have promised to tell you all; I will conceal nothing from you.

"The first time that I noticed him he did not please me. When, from childhood, one's favorite type has been a smiling and tender face, handsome features with a gloomy look, that somewhat menacing expression imparted by a love that is forcibly restrained, cause more alarm than sympathy. I was very sincere when I told Lawrence that I did not like handsome men. I was touched by his devotion, I appreciated his noble character; but, when you saw him at Blois, I felt absolutely nothing more for him than for Léon, although his society was more agreeable and better suited me. When he left us, it did not trouble me much. When I found him again seriously ill at Paris, I nursed him as I should have nursed Léon or Moranbois. The poor care for each other, without any of that prudent reserve that the rich can maintain toward each other even to their death-bed. We cannot easily procure a substitute; we assist each other personally; perhaps we love each other more.

"You must know, besides, from Lawrence, what sort of friendship, cordial, familiar, confidential, their intimate mode of life creates among members of a theatre. They quarrel frequently; but each reconciliation strengthens the fraternal bond; they are offended at a trifle; they carry

their penitence to excess. Our company experienced great reverses; you know our shipwreck, the tragic death of Marco, our adventures with brigands, our misfortunes, our dangers, our sufferings, all the cases of excitement which made this general friendship a sort of collective intoxication. It was at this period, on our return from this affecting campaign, that the love of Lawrence began to trouble me. I saw clearly that he had not conquered it and that he was suffering from it still. When he returned to declare it to me openly, I had that time suffered in his absence on my own account.

"Bellamare had vexed me greatly, without knowing it. He had learned of the death of his wife. He had spoken of marrying again, in order to have a friend, a companion, a perpetual associate; and he had frankly consulted me, telling me that he had thought of Anna. She was rather young for him, he said; but she had had several lovers and two children. She must long for a tranquil life, for, by nature, she was sensible. With a good husband she would be so cheerfully and without regret.

"I showed no pique. I spoke to Anna, who laughed at the idea; she adored Bellamare, but like a daughter. It was a woman of Régine's age and style, she said, who would suit our beloved director.

"I was crestfallen; but when I wished to return this answer to Bellamare, he hardly knew what I was talking about. He had forgotten his fancy. He laughed at marriage; he declared himself incapable of having a faithful wife, because it would be

necessary to practise what one preached. He said that when he spoke of Anna to me, the evening before, he was completely carried away by the rôle of husband he had just been playing in Emile Augier's *Gabrielle*. He had longed for a family; he adored children. He had never had any. That was why he thought of marriage 'at least once every ten years!'

"I felt very foolish and very much humiliated. I swore to myself that he should never suspect my love. Lawrence arrived, in the mean time, and his passion bewildered me. I felt that I was a woman, that I was forever alone in life, that happiness was in my reach, perhaps, that my refusal was unjust and cruel; that I was going to break the most generous, most faithful and purest heart. I came near saying, 'Yes, let us depart together!'

"But that lasted only a moment; for while Lawrence was speaking to me I saw Bellamare sauntering at a distance, in a dejected attitude, and I remembered that, in giving myself up to another love, I should have to forswear, to bury forever, that which had filled my life with courage, honor, and labor. This man, whom I had loved since my childhood, who had loved me so reverently in spite of the lightness of his habits, who venerated me as a divinity, and who did not love me because he loved me too much, it would be necessary never to see him again. That immense respect he had for me he would not have for another. That unvarying devotion I had had for him, in what woman's heart would

he find it again? When one spoke to another of loving Bellamare, she laughed! I, alone, was obstinate enough to wish to be the companion of his poverty, the support of his old age, the rehabilitation of his ugliness. I alone, who had never inspired him with desire, knew the pure, religious, and truly great side of this variable soul, ardently in love with the ideal. I saw the lines come on his forehead, his eyes grow hollow, and his laugh less free; and there were moments of profound weariness which made his acting more confused, his attacks of sensibility more nervous, sometimes whimsical. Bellamare felt the first approach of discouragement, for he urged me to marry Lawrence, and I perceived in him a sort of despair, like that of a father who casts his only daughter into the arms of a husband who will take her away forever.

"I saw the future, the troupe soon separated, the association broken up, Bellamare, alone, seeking new companions, falling into the hands of adventurers and knaves. I knew well that my influence over him and the others, the support that I had always given to Moranbois's rigid economy, the gentleness that I had used to soothe the secret and ever-increasing bitterness of Léon, my remonstrances with Anna to prevent her from flying away with the first new-comer, had alone secured, for a long time past, this continually floating chain, whose links I always fastened patiently again. And I was going to leave this excellent man, this noble artist, this tender father, this friend of fifty, because he lacked the youth and beauty of Lawrence!

"I was horrified at this idea; I wept foolishly, without being able to conceal it from the one whom my selfishness regretted and whom my firmness crushed; but while weeping before him, while sobbing on the breast of Bellamare, who comprehended nothing of it, I renewed to God my vow never to abandon him, and I consoled myself for Lawrence's departure, because I was satisfied with my conduct.

"And now that three years have elapsed since my sacrifice, three years which must certainly have cured Lawrence, and during which I have been more than ever necessary and useful to Bellamare, for I have seen him, mature at last, take heed of the morrow, from affection for me, deprive himself of useless pleasures to devote himself to me when I was ill, renounce dissipations which had hitherto had dominion over him, in the fear of wasting the personal resources which he wished to consecrate to me; in a word, act like a man of prudence and self-control, the most impossible thing for him, in the sole design of sustaining me, in case of need: it is now that I should regret not being rich by the provision of another? I should confess to Lawrence that I could have loved him, I should return to him, because he has inherited his uncle's fortune? And you would esteem me? and he could esteem me still? and I should not be ashamed of myself? No, madame, fear nothing; I have studied *Chimène* in the text too much not to have understood and adopted the Spanish device, *Soy quien soy*. I remember too well that

my father was a man of honor, to lack dignity. I have loved Bellamare too much to lose the habit of preferring him to all. You may say to Lawrence all that I have just said to you; you may even add that at present I am sure of Bellamare, and that at an early day I intend to offer him my hand. And if it is true, if it is possible, that Lawrence still has some emotion in recalling the past, be sure that he loves Bellamare too much to be jealous of the one who was his best friend. Now, embrace me, without fear or effort, and consider that you have in me a heart most devoted to your cause, most disinterested for your happiness."

"Ah! my dear Impéria," cried the Countess, who clasped her in her arms, "what a woman you are! In my days of pride, I often figured in my own eyes as a grand heroine of romance! How far below you I have always been, I who based my glory on knowing how to wait far off and without danger, while you devoted yourself to the martyrdom of waiting, with the spectacle of so many disenchantments before your eyes! When I waited thus, I knew that Lawrence, secluded in his village, and sacrificing all to filial duty, purified himself, and unconsciously rendered himself worthy of me. And you, following the footsteps of the one you loved, you perceived his faults, you shared his misfortunes, and you were not discouraged!"

"Let us talk no more of myself," said Impéria; "let us think of what you must do that we may all be happy."

"I will speak to Bellamare," replied Madame de Valdère, quickly.

It was unnecessary, Bellamare had rejoined me in the *bourdoir*. He had heard all he was almost suffocated by surprise; then, seized suddenly with a great excitement, he rushed into the drawing-room, and, addressing Madame de Valdère and Impéria, he cried,—

"O excellent women! how cruel you are, without knowing it! What faults, what stains you would spare us, if you would take us for what we are, in love, children ready to receive the impulse that you give them!—Impéria! Impéria! if I had suspected sooner! See what comes from guarding myself from presumption! See what it is to be neither assuming, nor selfish, nor calculating in anything! How you have punished me for it, you, who with a word could have rendered me worthy of you ten years earlier! And here I am old, and now perhaps unworthy of the happiness that you will give me! No, I do not believe it, notwithstanding, and I would not have you believe it. I am willing that all should be as it is! Ah, this dream that I have never dared to tell, I have had it a thousand times, and you have not suspected it! I have loved you madly, Impéria, loved you wrongly, I acknowledge, since I thought only of forgetting it, or defending myself from it by every means. I wished to marry you to Lawrence; I wished to divert my thoughts by intoxicating, transient pleasures. You suffered from them, when you could so easily have restrained me! What is woman's pride, then? A great and

fine thing, I admit, but a torture of which we know only the severity, and do not see the use! Confess that you have doubted me too much; confess it, if you do not wish me to despise myself for having doubted too much also! — And you, madame," he said, turning to the Countess, "you have acted like her; it is the romance of a generous woman then! Ah well, it is not generous at all, since it delays happiness for the sake of some ideal that you seek, until the meridian of life, when it is within your reach —"

"You rebuke us," said Impéria; "would not one say that we were the guilty ones, and you —"

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed Bellamare, still more carried away; "you do not see that I am mad with pride just now, that I justify myself, that I defend myself, and — a thing that never happened to me before — that I love and admire myself? Since you love me, I must be something great and excellent. Let me imagine it, for, if I should return to my former opinion of myself, I should fear for your reason. Let me ramble on, let me be insane, or I must explode!"

He went on talking, somewhat at random, like an actor who, not finding his rôle exalted to the pitch of his emotion, improvises unconsciously. It was easy to see that he had loved Impéria more ardently than she had wished to believe, and that the fear of ridicule, so powerful with a mind accustomed to represent the absurd in human nature, had paralyzed his impulses on all occasions. He ended by weeping like a child;

and, as I desired to speak of Lawrence and arrange something with Madame de Valdère, he confessed that he had lost his head, and could think only of himself. He rushed out into the wood, where we saw him running and talking to himself like one insane. I wondered at this power of personal emotion, whose fire, so often kindled for the benefit of others, burned still in him as in a young man.

Five days later Lawrence returned to Bertheville; he found Madame de Valdère there, who was waiting for him in order to give him a great surprise. He brought back all the documents necessary for the approaching publication of their banns. She did not allow him to talk of their affairs and plans; this evening must be devoted to the happiness of meeting again, and recalling the past in sweet tranquillity.

I arrived, as she had bidden me, when dinner was over. Not only had I been initiated into what was going to happen, but I had taken an active part in it, and I must not lose sight of Lawrence while the Countess was away from him. She had left us to make an exquisite toilet, which she completed very quickly; and when she returned for Lawrence to conduct her to the drawing-room, she was dazzling. It was certainly enough to turn his head, and cause him to forget the interesting but wasted Impéria. In the saloon she said to him, "I have played the mistress here in your absence, as if I were already at home. You are to take coffee in the great hall below, whose complete restoration I have

hastened, for I was anxious to let you see this beautiful work ended, the wainscots finished, the inlaid floor polished, the old lustres hung and lighted. They have also tried the fire there, which is charming. Nothing smokes; come and see, and if you are not satisfied with my management, do not tell me so; I should feel too badly."

We passed into the great apartment whose use had not yet been decided by Lawrence. It was an old council-chamber, fully equal to that of Saint Vandrille. The architecture was so well preserved, and the wainscots of so good a style, that he had desired and effected its restoration without other object than the love of repairing. He admired the general effect, and did not ask why a large green curtain cut off and concealed all the farther part. He thought that this hid the scaffolding that they had not had time to remove. The secret of our rapid preparations had not transpired. He really suspected nothing. Then a little invisible orchestra, that we had procured from Rouen, played a classic overture; the coarse canvas which concealed the back fell and disclosed another curtain of red and gold, that revealed the front of a pretty little improvised stage.

Lawrence started.

"What is it?" he said; "a play? I care for them no longer; I could not listen to it."

"It will be short," replied the Countess. "Your workmen, whose affections you have gained, have planned to give you this diversion; it will be very simple; meet it in

the same spirit, and think kindly of the intention."

"Bah!" said Lawrence; "they will be pretentious and ridiculous!"

He looked at the programme; it was a performance made up of fragments. They were going to play the night-scenes three, eight, and nine of the fifth act of the "Marriage of Figaro."

"Come!" said Lawrence, "they are mad, these good people; but I have been so bad an Almadiva in my time, that I have a right to hiss no one."

The curtain rose. Figaro was on the stage. It was Bellamare in a handsome costume, walking about, in the obscurity of the scene, with inimitable grace and naturalness. I know not if Lawrence recognized him at once. As for me I hardly knew him. I was unused to these sudden transformations. I thought the whole secret lay in the costume and the paint. I did not know that the actor of ability really grows younger by some mysterious operation of his inward feeling. Bellamare was admirably formed and still supple. He had a fine elastic leg, a slender waist, graceful shoulders, head well proportioned and well set on. His rose-colored net harmonized skilfully its vivid hue with the soberer paint on his cheeks. His small black eyes were fine diamonds. His teeth, still handsome, flashed in the half-light of the simulated night upon the stage. He looked thirty at most; he seemed charming to me. I dreaded to hear his defective voice. He spoke the opening words of the scene, *O femme! femme! femme!*

créature décevante ! and this peculiar voice, affected by some very perceptible inward sadness, did not shock me more than that of Samson, which had so often moved and penetrated me. He continued. He spoke so well ! This monologue is so charming, and he had so finely studied and understood it ! I cannot say if I was influenced by all I knew of his real character, but the actor appeared admirable to me. I forgot his age ; I understood the obstinate love of Impéria ; I applauded him with enthusiasm.

Lawrence was mute and motionless. His eyes were fixed ; he seemed changed into a statue. He held his breath ; he did not seek to comprehend what he saw. The sweat stood in drops upon his forehead, when passing to scene eight, Suzanne entered and began the dialogue with Figaro. It was Impéria ! Madame de Valdère was pale as death. Lawrence, divining her anxiety, turned to her, took her hand and held it to his lips all the time that the scene lasted. It is a rapid love-duet in warm colors. The two friends played it with fervor. Impéria appeared as much younger as Bellamare ; she was full of fire and animation ; one would have said that the poor weary actress had vitality enough and to spare.

Lambesq came next, to represent with more energy than discrimination the anger of Almaviva. Chérubin showed himself a moment, with the features of Anna, whose precocious *embonpoint* seemed to have vanished, she wore her page's dress so easily and prettily. Moranbois

appeared, also, beneath the great hat of Basile, which lent additional hollowness to his pale and withered face. They said only a few words. Léon had outlined a rapid closing scene which would serve as *dénouement*, and remove the necessity of such parts as were lacking. They had only wished to show themselves to Lawrence, alive and well, and make last year's roses bloom for him a moment amid the snows of winter. Léon expressed to him, in the name of all, this tender and fraternal sentiment in a few well-turned and well-spoken verses.

Lawrence then rushed toward them with open arms, at the same time that they sprang lightly from the platform to hasten to him. Madame de Valdère breathed again, on seeing that her betrothed embraced Impéria like the others, with as much joy and as little embarrassment.

Lawrence, on seeing the noble girl also embrace Madame de Valdère with effusion, understood what had passed between them.

"We have all learned your happiness," said Impéria to him ; "we wished to tell you ours. Bellamare and I, betrothed a long time since, decided in America to be married on our return to France. So our visit is to impart that information to you."

Lawrence uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"And yet," said he, "I had thought of it twenty times !"

"And you could not believe it ?" said Bellamare. "I, who had never thought of it in all that time, cannot believe it yet. It is so improbable !

Are you jealous of my prospects?" he added, in an undertone.

"No," answered Lawrence in the same key, "you deserve her, exactly because you did not seek her. If I were still in love with her, your happiness would console me for my wound; but the unknown triumphed when she revealed herself; I am hers, and truly hers, forever!"

The actors went to take off their costumes. Lawrence, at the feet of the Countess, — in the saloon which I nearly entered thoughtlessly, and from which I withdrew before they had perceived me, — blessed her delicate confidence, and swore that she should never repent it.

I strolled off, a little curiously, after the actors. I met Impéria, who had changed her costume, and reappeared in a very handsome toilet which still looked fresh, although she had worn it a number of times, she told me, in playing *La Dame aux Camellias* at New York. In another room I perceived Moranbois, and thought I could enter, but drew back, somewhat surprised, on seeing Chérubin there with her baby. The child was laughing as he drew his fat rosy fingers over the gilt buttons of the page's vest.

"Enter, enter," cried the travestied actress; "come and see how beautiful he is!"

She lifted him up, and raising him in her arms she pressed the infant to her breast, purified by this passionate embrace.

"This dear love," she added, "will never know another parent than his mother, and he will be very fortunate! He will have only me! His

father, who does not care for him, is an angel to me, since he leaves him to my sole possession."

"You do not fear," said I, as I admired the boy, who was magnificent, "that this life may agitate and fatigue him?"

"No, no," she answered. "I have lost two that they induced me to put out to nurse, on the pretext that they would be better cared for. I resolved that, if I had the happiness to have another, it should not leave me. Can a child be ill in the arms of his mother? This one is always in the greenroom when I play, and he does not cry; he knows already that he must not cry there. He is pleased to see me in my costume; he loves tinsel. He is wild with joy when I am rouged; he adores feathers!"

"And he will be an actor?" I inquired.

"Certainly, so as not to leave me; besides, if it is the hardest of professions, it is still the one in which, from time to time, one finds most happiness."

"Come!" said Moranbois, "dress yourself, and give me my godson."

He took the child, addressed him tenderly as *Toad*, and carried him up and down the corridors, singing to him in his cavernous falsetto voice, some air impossible to recognize, but which the little fellow relished greatly, and attempted to sing also, after his fashion.

An exquisite and charming supper reassembled us all from midnight until six o'clock in the morning. The Venetian glasses flashed their vivid colors in the light of the wax-tapers. Hothouse flowers, raised at

various heights upon a circular stage, surrounded us with spring-like perfumes, while the snow continued to heap the park, lighted by the full moon. We were noisier, we eight, than a band of students. We talked all together, we touched glasses at every recollection, and then we amused ourselves by hearing Bellamare describe, with an incomparable charm that Lawrence had not in the least exaggerated, his campaign in America; a musical rehearsal, in which they had sworn to continue without interruption and to keep time, while passing the rapids of the St. Lawrence in a steamer; a night of merry-making at Quebec, when they had supped by the light of the *aurora borealis*; a night of distress when they were lost in the virgin forest; days of fatigue and fasting in the desert beyond the great lakes; an unpleasant encounter with savages, another with troops of bison; great ovations in California, where they had had Chinese for machinists, etc. When he had captivated us by these recitals, he made us laugh and sing; then we paused, to listen to the great winter silence outside; and these moments of reflection penetrated Lawrence with a feeling of moral, intellectual, and physical repose, whose solemn sweetness he at last appreciated.

Madame de Valdère was adorable. She amused herself like a child; she called Impéria "thou," and the latter returned it, in order not to wound her. Occasionally she addressed Bellamare in the same way, without perceiving it. Bellamare was already her old friend and tried con-

fidant. Between her and Impéria, those two irreproachable women, to whom he had been a father, he felt absolved, he said, from his former sins.

Purpurin served us, travestied as a negro.

When the supper was ended, Lawrence addressed Moranbois, giving him his ancient *sobriquet*, which the Hercules permitted only to his best friends.

"Coq-en-bois," he said, "where is your cash-box? I am still a member of the association; I wish to see the bottom of your cash-box."

"That is easy," replied the steward, coolly. "We came here for the precise purpose of settling our account with you."

And he drew from his pocket a massive pocket-book, worn and locked, from which he took five bank-notes.

"We know your trick!" replied Lawrence; "pass me your utensil."

He looked at the pocket-book; the sum which they returned him deducted, there remained three hundred francs.

"Eternal *boulotteurs*!" said Lawrence, laughing, "it is very fortunate that you have played properly this evening! Come, my wife," he said, addressing the Countess, "since this evening we 'thou' each other, bring the receipts of our artists; it is for you to estimate them."

She kissed him on the forehead, before us all, took the key which he held out to her, disappeared, and returned quickly.

When she had filled and stuffed the steward's pocket-book, there were

bills to the amount of two hundred thousand francs in the cash-box.

"Do not say a word," she said to Bellamare; "half of it is mine; it is *Impéria's* dowry."

"I made over, to-day, my part of the profits to my godson," said Morranbois, with undisturbed composure.

"And I mine to Bellamare," said Léon. "I have also inherited from an uncle, not a millionaire, but I have enough to live on."

"And you leave us?" said Bellamare, dropping the pocket-book in dismay. "O fortune! if you separate us, you are good for nothing but to stir our punch!"

"I, I leave you!" exclaimed Léon, also pale, but with the inspired air of an author who has thought of his *dénouement*, "never! for me it is too late! Inspiration is a mad thing which desires an impossible situation. If I become a true poet, it will be on condition of not becoming a man of sense. And then—" added he, with a little confusion, "Anna, it seems to me that I hear your child crying."

She rose, and passed into the next room, where the infant slumbered in his cradle, undisturbed by our revelry.

"My friends," Léon then continued, "the emotion of this night of excitement and friendship has affected me so strongly, that I wish to open my heart, too long sealed up. There is a remorse in my life, and the name of this remorse is Anna! I was this poor girl's first love, and I have ill requited her! She was a child without principles or reason. It was for me, a man, to give her a heart and a brain. I did not know

it, because I could not. I thought my intellect too great to perform a good act of which I should have reaped the reward. I was at an age of high ambitions, bitter rancors, and foolish illusions. Why should I, I asked myself, devote myself to the happiness of one woman, when all the others ought to give it to me! Thus reasons presumptuous youth. I have reached maturity, and I see that in other stations women are no better than in ours. If they have more prudence and reserve, they have less devotion and sincerity. The faults that Anna has committed she would not have committed, if I had been patient and generous; now this deluded girl is a tender mother, so tender, so courageous, so touching, that I pardon all! If I returned to the world, to marry under these conditions would be ridiculous and scandalous. In the life we lead, it is a good action; whence I conclude that for me the theatre will be more moral than society. So I remain there, and bind myself to it indissolubly. Bellamare, you have often reproached me for having profited by the weakness of a child, and scorned her for that weakness which ought to have attached me to her. I would not accept this reproach. I feel now that it was merited, that it was the source of my misanthropy. I intend to free myself from it; I will marry Anna. She thinks that I have had a return of love for her, but that it is not serious, and that my continual suspicions will render our union impossible. She will not permit me to think the child is mine, to punish me for doubting her. Ah well, I

love the child, and I will rear it. I **will** do justice to the mother. I **swear** to you, in her absence, my **friends**, so that you may serve as **vouchers** for me with her; I **swear** to marry Anna —”

“And you will do well,” cried **Bellamare**, “for I am sure, for my part, **that** she has always loved you. — **Come!**” said he, addressing the rising day, which, mingled oddly with the moonlight, sent a broad blue glimmer across the flowers and tapers, “**shine** forth; young caressing day, **the** fairest of my life! All my friends **happy**, and I — I! **Impéria!** my **saint**, my beloved, my daughter! we **are** then at last to act for art! — **Listen**, Lawrence, if I accept the capital that you lend me —”

“Pardon,” said Lawrence, “I hope that this time there will be no question of restitution. I know you, **Bellamare**; the perpetual obstacle of your life is your conscience. With a smaller capital than that I put into your hands you would have retired from business, if you had not always owed friends whom you would not ruin. With me you cannot have that fear. My offering will not even inconvenience me; and if it did a little, if I should have to curtail something of my too large expenditures — You have given me three years of a well-occupied life, which has carried away all the froth from my youth, and there now remains to me only the love of an ideal of which you are the most persuasive and persuaded apostle and professor. You have formed my taste, elevated my ideas, taught me devotion and courage. All that is young and gener-

ous in my soul I owe to you. Thanks to you, I did not become a sceptic. Thanks to you, I have a worship for the true, a confidence in goodness, a power of loving. If I am still worthy to be the choice of an adorable woman, it is because, through a life wild as a dream, you have always said to me, ‘My child, when the angels pass in the dust that we raise, let us kneel, for there are angels, whatever they may say!’ So I am your debtor forever, **Bellamare**, and it is not with one or two years of my income that I can repay you. Money does not discharge such debts. I understand; you wish to follow art and not the profession; ah well, my friend, recruit a good company to complete your own, and act good pieces always. I do not think that you will make a fortune; there are so many people who love the ignoble! but I know you; you will be happy in your competence, when you can use good literature and apply a good method, without sacrificing anything to the exigencies of the receipts.”

“You are right!” answered **Bellamare**, radiant and affected. “You have understood me, and my dear associates understand me. O ideal of my life! to be no longer forced to earn money for my daily bread! To be able at last to say to the public, ‘Come to school, my little friend. If the beautiful bores you, go to bed. I have ceased to be the slave of your vulgar sous. We are not going to barter twaddle for bread. We have bread, even as yourself, my master; and we would far sooner eat it dry than soak it in the smoke of your mental grossness. Little public, you

who bring great profits, learn that Bellamare's theatre is not what you think. We can do without you when you sulk; we can wait for your return, when a taste for the true has come back to you. It is a duel between us and you. You make a strike? So be it! We shall play still better before fifty persons of culture than before a thousand indiscriminating geese! But see on the ceiling that red sunbeam, that makes all our faces, weary with the past, look wan and pale, but which, descending speedily upon our foreheads, shall make them resplendent with the joys of hope! It is the rising sun, it is the splendor of the true, it is the dazzling foot-light which ascends from the horizon, to illuminate the stage where all humanity is about to play the eternal drama of its passions, its struggles, its triumphs, and its downfalls. But we, since we are actors, are birds of night! We return into the shades of nothingness when the earth stirs and awakes; but here at last is the lovely morning which smiles on us as on real beings, and says to us, 'No, you are not spectres; no, the drama that you have acted this night is not an empty fiction; you have all

seized your ideal, and it will not escape you again. You can go to sleep, my poor artisans of fancy; you are now men like the others; you have strong affections, serious duties, durable joys. You have not bought them too dearly nor too late; look me in the face, I am life, and you have at last a right to life!'"

Bellamare's enthusiasm took possession of us all, and there was no one there who did not think that happiness lies in the consciousness we have of it, and by no means in the way the future keeps its promises. I was as excited as the rest, I who had had no other part or merit in all this adventure than that of devoting myself for some days to hastening and assuring the happiness of others.

When I found myself alone again, several days after, in the prosaic chain of my nomadic life, this supper of actors in the ancient monastery of Bertheville seemed like a dream to me, but like so singular and so romantic a dream, that I promised myself surely to fulfil my pledge to Lawrence, and to repeat it with the same guests as soon as circumstances would permit.

THE END.

CESARINE DIETRICH.

BY

GEORGE SAND.

TRANSLATED BY EDWARD STANWOOD.



NEW YORK:

R. WORTHINGTON, 750 BROADWAY.

1879.
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CESARINE DIETRICH.

BY MADAME GEORGE SAND.

I.

I WAS thirty-five; Cesarine Dietrich was fifteen, and had just lost her mother, when I resigned myself to becoming her instructor and governess.

As it is not my own story which I am going to relate, I will not waste time in stating how much reluctance I had to overcome, being of gentle birth, and destined in my early years to a life of ease, before persuading myself to enter the family of a commoner who had made a fortune in trade. A very few words will suffice to tell my situation, and the motive which determined me thus to sacrifice my liberty.

A daughter of the Count de Nermont, and left an orphan with my young sister, I was robbed by a pretended friend of my father. He had been charged with the duty of investing our money advantageously, and he fraudulently caused it to disappear. We were ruined. There hardly remained to us enough to procure the necessaries of life; but I did not repine. I was plain, and no one made love to me. I must no longer dream of marriage. But my sister was pretty: she was sought and married by Dr. Gilbert, an able physician, by whom

she had one son, my much-loved godson, Paul Gilbert. My name is Pauline.

My brother-in-law and my poor sister died young, — a few years intervening between their deaths, — leaving but very little to the dear child who was then at school. I foresaw that every thing would be eaten up by the expense of his education, and that his entrance into society would be impeded by poverty. Then it was that I determined upon the plan of increasing my own feeble resources by paid labor. In my lonely and meditative life, I had acquired sufficient learning for the task I was to undertake. Some friends of my family, who still remained devoted to me, busied themselves on my behalf. They made a bargain for me with the Dietrich family, into which I entered on terms very honorable to myself.

I hasten to say that I had no occasion to regret my decision. I found among these Germans resident at Paris a cordial hospitality and entire good-breeding. There were two brothers in partnership, Hermann and Karl. Their fortune was already reckoned by millions, and their honor had never been once suspected. An elder sister resided with them, and performed the

duty of housekeeper with precision, animation, and gentleness: in all other respects she was a nullity; but she entertained politely and discreetly, saying little, but doing much, and always with a view to the comfort of her guests.

The elder M. Dietrich, the father of Cesarine, was an active, energetic, clever, and self-willed man. His irreproachable honesty and his success in business had given him a little pride and a certain reserve in his intercourse with other men. He desired rather to be esteemed and respected than loved; but for his daughter and for myself he always manifested only perfect and indeed delicate and courteous kindness and consideration.

I was, then, as happy as possible in my new condition. I was appreciated, and had no occasion to be anxious about the future of my godson.

The Dietrich mansion was one of the most beautiful in new Paris. It was in the neighborhood of the Bois de Boulogne, and was moreover well situated by reason of its freedom from the noise of passing vehicles. In the midst of a community excessively fond of luxury and excitement, here were shade, solitude, and comparative quiet, behind the railings and the clumps of verdure of our little park. It was not the country, certainly; but it was, as it were, a mysterious boudoir, separated from the noisy world by a screen of flowers and leaves.

The late Madame Dietrich had loved society, she had many friends, and gave good dinners. Her balls were still the topic of the servants when I entered the family. At present the house was still in mourning; and there was no reason to suppose that M. Dietrich would ever again resume the brilliant mode of life which his wife

had led. He had very different tastes, and desired, for society, only a few of his friends and connections. So the great halls were closed; and he, while showing me through the darkened house, said, "This is not worth the notice of a woman of taste and good sense like yourself. It is brilliant, but nothing more. My poor dear wife used to like to show that we were rich. I never wished to deprive her of her pleasures, but I only associated with them out of complaisance. I want my daughter to have, like myself, modest tastes; then I might find quiet at home, — though that is a poor compensation indeed for the misfortune of being alone.

"You will not be alone," said I. "Your daughter will become your friend. I feel sure that she is so to some extent already."

"Not yet," he replied. "My poor child is too much absorbed in her own grief to think much of mine. Let us hope that she will do so, sooner or later."

It was a sort of unintended reproach upon Cesarine; but I did not reply to it, not yet knowing any thing of the character and sentiments of the young girl. I wished to judge her for myself, and I did not want to meet her with any thing like prejudice. We had already been introduced to each other. She was exceedingly pretty, and even handsome; for, if she had still the immature form of girlhood, she nevertheless possessed elegance and grace. Her features were clear-cut and regular. Her sadness and grief gave to her countenance something touching and austere, so that at the first sight I felt myself compelled to respect as much as to pity her. When I was alone with her for the first time, I thought it fit that

I should establish an understanding with her, and with the gravity which the occasion required.

"I do not pretend," said I, "to replace, even in a measure, the mother you mourn. I cannot even offer my devotion as something which should appear desirable to you. I have been told that I should be useful to you, and I shall try to be so. You may be sure, that, if there is any mistake about that, I shall be the first to discover it; and all I ask of you is, that you will not believe me to be actuated by a personal interest in continuing our relations if they are not very sensibly profitable to you."

She looked fixedly at me, as though she did not understand fully; and I was going to explain my resolution, when she placed her little hand upon mine, and said, "I understand very well; and, if I am astonished, it is not because you are so proud and dignified. They told me that you were so, and I believed it. But I thought that you were affectionate; and I expected, that, before any thing else, you would promise to love me."

"Can one promise affection where it has not been asked?"

"That is to say, I ought to have asked it first. Well, I request your love. Will you grant it me?"

If her face had answered to her words, I should have kissed the dear child at once. But I was too much on my guard for that; and I thought I read in her eyes that she was examining me and drawing me out, as much as I on my side was testing and observing her.

"You cannot desire my friendship," I said, "before knowing whether I deserve yours. We only know each other yet by the good things we have been told about each other. Let us

wait and get acquainted. I am resolved to love you dearly, if you are what you appear to be."

"And what do I appear to be?" she asked, looking at me with a little air of suspicion. "I am sad, and only sad. You can't judge me."

"Your sorrow does you honor, and makes you more lovely. It is the grief you have in your soul and in your eyes which attracts me towards you."

"Then you want to be able to love me? I will try to appear amiable. I need some one to love me, of course. I was accustomed to affection. My poor mother adored me and indulged me. My father loves me dearly too, but he will not indulge me; and yet I am at that age when, if one is not indulged, it is very hard to believe that one is loved truly. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, indeed; and I am resolved to indulge you."

"Out of pity, I suppose."

"By the necessity of my nature. I do not love by halves; and I am unhappy when I cannot give a little happiness to those about me. But when I think I see that they misuse that happiness, I escape from them that I may not injure them."

"That is to say, you think it dangerous to love people too much. You agree with papa, then, who imagines the strangest things about me. He says that we are put into the world to struggle, and consequently to suffer, and that it is wrong to make children too happy. He declares that obstacles and privations are necessary to them to break them into the business of life. These are the words of my dear papa: I know them by heart. I do not rebel, because I love and respect him: but I am not persuaded; and when one

is sweet and tender with me, I am responsive and happy, consequently better. You will see. As you don't want to promise any thing, let us wait. You shall study me; and you will soon see that the method of poor dear mamma was right, the only good method with me."

"Can I ask you? — But no. Your beautiful eyes are filling with tears, and make me want to weep with you, and so to love you too much and too soon."

She threw her arms around my neck and sobbed. I was conquered. She said nothing: she could not speak. But there was so much frankness and confidence in her weeping on my shoulder. She seemed, notwithstanding the firmness of her features, so much like a poor wounded being demanding protection, that I began to adore her on this very first day of our acquaintance, without stopping to inquire whether she was not going to rule over me, instead of submitting to my influence. This fear only came to me later; for during these first few weeks her temper was as sweet as an angel's, and her tenderness was absolutely irresistible. It is true that I did not require much of her: she was in such deep sorrow that her health forbade; and, besides, I found her possessed of so much intelligence, that I did not believe it to be necessary to hasten her studies.

II.

WE lived very quietly in this little palace, now become too large. All the visits of condolence had been received; and, with the exception of a few old friends, no visitors were now admitted; it was M. Dietrich's wish.

Deeply affected by the loss of his wife, he longed for spring, now near at hand, when he was to withdraw for the whole summer, to the country, into a retirement still more profound. He quitted business: he would have done so long before, but for the expensive tastes of his wife. He found himself rich enough, — too rich, he said. He had determined to devote himself to agriculture, and to oversee his own country estate. He even had an idea of selling or letting his city residence; and then, for the first time, I noticed the symptoms of disagreement between himself and his daughter. She loved the country as well as Paris, she said; but she also loved Paris as well as the country: and she could not look with pleasure upon the determination of her father to live altogether away from the city. She had very urgent reasons for her opinion; which also appeared very just reasons, and which she expressed with a skill which I should not have expected from one of her age. M. Dietrich, who was proud of her intelligence, allowed her, and even encouraged her, to discuss the matter with him, in order to have the pleasure of replying to her; for he was self-willed, as I have said, and did not believe that any one could ever hold an argument against him. When discussion was exhausted, and he thought he had answered her completely, taking her silence for a confession of defeat, he noticed that she was weeping. Those great tears which fell upon her hand, without her appearing to feel them, troubled him strangely; and I saw upon his handsome but austere features an expression of mingled sympathy and uneasiness.

"Why do you weep?" he asked, after trying for a few minutes to seem as though he had not noticed her mute

reproach. "Come, tell me: I don't like you to be sulky. It offends and troubles me."

"I will tell you, dear papa," said Cesarine, going to him and kissing him, — a caress of which he seemed to me to be more susceptible because he tried to appear not. "Yes, I will tell you; for you would never guess. My mother loved this house: she chose it, arranged it, and ornamented it herself. You did not always agree with her; and you had a different idea of the beautiful. I do not yet know what I think on these points. I don't know whether our manner of living is in good or bad taste. But I see mamma again in every thing here; and I love what she loved, just because she loved it. You are so good, that you would never oppose her. You said, 'After all, it is your house.' Well, I say, it is mamma's house. I am willing to go into the country, which she did not like. I shall like it, dear papa, because I shall be with you; but at the idea of never returning here, or of seeing strangers at home in mother's house when I return, I weep. You see it, — I weep in spite of myself. I cannot help it."

"Well, well," said M. Dietrich, rising, "dry your eyes. The house shall be neither sold nor let. He went out a little abruptly, making a motion to me which I did not exactly understand, but which I thought might mean that he wished me to join him in the garden; and I went.

"You see, my dear Mlle. de Nermont," said he, taking my hand, "this poor child is going to be just like her mother. She will enter into none of my views, she will partake of none of my tastes. My arguments, however wise, will go in at one ear and out at the other."

"I cannot believe it," I replied. "She is too intelligent."

"Her mother was intelligent too. Do not suppose that she disappointed me by any lack of spirit. She knew very well that she was wrong in her ideas; she said as much, and was altogether good and charming; but she yielded to the madness of the age. She had a fever of love for the world; and whenever she had made to me the sacrifice of some whim, she suffered and wept as Cesarine suffers and weeps at this moment. I know how to resist no matter what man, my equal in force and skill, but how resist feeble beings, — women and children?"

I remonstrated with him, that the attachment of Cesarine for "her mother's house" was not a vain fancy, and that she had given good reasons for it.

"If her motives are really sincere," replied he, "and you see that I do not wish to doubt it, that is the more reason why she should make to me the sacrifice of submitting to the slight disappointment I impose."

"You are then actually persuaded, Monsieur Dietrich, that youth should be systematically habituated to endurance, or at least to disappointment?"

"Isn't that your opinion also?" he cried, with an energy of conviction which hardly admitted of reply.

"Permit me," said I, "to say that I was 'spoiled' in my youth like others. I did not pass through what is called the School of Misfortune, until I was at the age when one is in possession of his full strength and faculties. I thank God that it was so; for I do not know how I should have endured misfortune if it had come to me before I was armed to defend myself against it."

"Then," said he, pursuing his idea without noticing objections, "you have improved since you were called upon to endure. You were previously only a soul without self-consciousness. I remember my own childhood. I was nothing until I was compelled to fight and struggle, at my own risk and peril."

"The force of circumstances brings about that fight and struggle in some form for all who enter the world. Society is hard to attack, terrible sometimes. Do you believe, therefore, that it is wise to invent disappointment for children? Do they not meet it from infancy? If life brings happiness only in the days of ignorance and heedlessness, don't you think it cruel to shorten that little space, under the pretext that it cannot last?"

"There you reason like my wife. Alas! all women reason alike. They have for weakness not only regard and pity, but a sort of respect and sympathy. It is very wrong, Mlle. de Nermont, very unfortunate, I assure you."

"If you blame me for my opinions, my dear M. Dietrich, I am very sorry not to have known yours better before I entered your family; but" —

"But you are ready to leave me if I do not think like yourself? There is the woman again with her submission, which is in itself tyranny! You know well that you would inflict a serious injury upon me, by renouncing a task which it was so difficult to induce you to accept. You know just as well that I will not try to supersede you, so evident is it to me that you are to be the guardian angel of my daughter. Her aunt cannot be her instructor, — she is too ignorant: besides, she has the defects of her sex. She loves the world" —

"She doesn't seem to do so."

"Her appearance deceives you. She

has also, I admit, in an eminent degree, the virtues of her sex. She is laborious, economical, orderly, and ingenious in the duties of hospitality. Do not think that I do her injustice, for indeed I admire and respect her highly; but I tell you she loves the world, as every woman, however serious she may be, loves the flattery of her self-love. My poor sister Helmina is neither young nor pretty, nor brilliant in conversation. She receives guests politely, and gives the directions for a dinner admirably. She knows it, and is frequently complimented on her accomplishments; and the more her skill in these matters is recognized, the prouder does she become, and the more consoled for her nullity in every other respect."

"You are a severe observer, M. Dietrich; and I am afraid that my turn to be judged by your Spartan impartiality will soon come. I fear it, I confess; for I am far from feeling perfect."

"You are relatively perfect: my judgment has been formed already. You will indulge Cesarine so much the more. It will not be from selfishness, like the others, who regret past pleasures, and hope to see them renewed with her as mistress in the house. It will be from goodness, from devotion, from tenderness towards her; for she already has such irresistible attractions" —

"To which you are the first to yield!"

"Yes; but I do not wish to do so. Don't allow yourself to be ruled by her; that is what I ask of you. Make this effort in her interest, promise me."

"Certainly, I promise you, if I see that she abuses my good nature by requiring what would be harmful. But that has not happened yet; and I must not torment myself about a contingency which is not to be anticipated."

"You count for nothing, then, her opposition to my desire to sell the house?"

"Ought I to persuade her to submit to your wishes in this matter?"

"Yes: I beg you to do so."

"Shall I dare to tell you that your plan seems to me cruel?"

"No, it is not; for I will not sell it. I wish to have it conceded that I may sell it, so as to teach Cesarine to yield with good grace. Be sure, that, if parents do not teach children to renounce what they have set their hearts upon, they will never learn it of themselves. The happiness which one pretends to give them only makes them unhappy for the rest of their lives."

Perhaps he was right. I did not dare to insist; and I went to rejoin my charge with the intention of doing what I had been requested, but I found her smiling. "Spare yourself the pain of persuading me," she broke out. "I heard accidentally all that papa said, and all that you replied. I did not lose a word. There is no harm done. You are two good angels for me, — papa an austere angel, who wishes me happiness by all means; you an angel of sweetness, who wish me the same thing by the natural means. You felt that you must adopt his method, but that it might lead me to hypocrisy. What would he think, if, after having seen me submissive, he should discover that I had not taken his threats seriously? Truly, if am to be spoiled, as they say, that is to be corrupted morally, it will be by him. He will teach me the habit of pretending submission, and nevertheless of imposing upon him, without his suspecting it, the sacrifice of his own will. God be thanked! I am better than he thinks. I will yield every thing out of love for him. I will follow your instruc-

tions. I will make you very happy, only" —

"Only what, my darling?"

"Nothing," she replied, kissing my hand; but her beautiful glance, at once tender and self-willed, finished her sentence better than words; I will make you very happy, only you must do all that I desire.

She understood herself well, this energetic, obstinate, and powerful young girl. She united in herself her mother's suppleness and her father's strength of purpose. In the words of the old family doctor, whom I consulted about the best mode of treating her, she had a double character, with all the patience of a shrewd woman for compassing her ends, and all the energy of a man of action for overturning obstacles and clearing away resisting objects. In that case, thought I, why should her father torment himself on her account? He wishes her to be strong: she is invincible. He seeks to harden her: she is a fire which hardens others. He offers to teach her to bear defeat, as though she were not destined to conquer! Do those who know how to overcome need endurance?

III.

SHE almost alarmed me by her power. I determined to study her well before revolving like a satellite about this star. It was necessary to know if she was as good as she was amiable; if she would use her power for evil or for good.

It was not easy to make up my mind on this point; and to its consideration I devoted more than a year. One day in the country, I was startled by the cries of a little bird which she kept in a

cage, and which had nothing to eat. As it disturbed our music-lesson, and as, moreover, I could not bear to see it suffer, I arose to give it food. Cesarine appeared not to notice the action; but, after the lesson, carried the cage away to her room, and I very soon heard again the bird's cries of distress. I asked her why, since the poor little creature knew how to eat, she did not leave its food where it could reach it. "For a very simple reason," she said. "If it could get along without me, it would care no more for me."

"But if you should forget it?"

"I shall not forget it."

"Then you condemn it intentionally to the punishment of waiting and to the tortures of hunger; for it cries unceasingly."

"I do it intentionally: I am going to try papa's method with it."

"Not so: it is wicked trifling. The method is not applicable to unreasoning beings. Say, rather, that you love the bird with a selfish and cruel love. Little does it matter to you that the little fellow is suffering, provided it is attached to you. Take care not to treat creatures of your own kind in such a manner."

"In that case," said she, laughing, "my method differs from that of papa, since it applies only to beings not gifted with reason."

I tried to prove to her that it is our duty to render happy the creatures placed in our care, even the lowest and most feeble.

"What is happiness to a creature which thinks only of eating?" she replied with a pretty shrug of her shoulders.

"To eat. Infants at the breast have no other emotion. Should they be made to feel the pangs of hunger to make them attached to their nurse?"

"My father apparently thinks so."

"He does not think so, nor do you. Why this constant teasing about your absent father? Let us admit that his method may not be unquestioned" —

"There, that's what I wanted you to say."

"And it was for that you tortured your little bird?"

"No: I didn't think of such a thing. I wished to render myself, myself exclusively, necessary to its existence: but it is taking too much pains for such a silly creature; and, as it has wings, I will give it its liberty."

"Stop a moment! Tell me your whole idea. In giving it liberty, do you make a sacrifice?"

"Ah! you wish to dissect me, my good friend?"

"I only ask," I said, "that you may examine yourself."

"I know myself now."

"I do not believe it."

"You think it impossible at my age? Have you not forced me to it by your constant questions? This curiosity of yours about me forces me to examine myself from morning until night. It will mature me too quickly, I warn you. You will do better not to enwrap me so much in my own consciousness, and to let me live as I prefer. I shall become so metaphysical under your argumentation, that I shall no longer enjoy any thing. Ah! mamma knew me better. When I asked her any thing abstruse she answered, 'You have no need to know;' and, if she saw me thinking too much, she spoke of pretty dolls' dresses or of my own. She wanted me to be a woman, — nothing more, nothing better. Papa wants me to think like a man, and you dream of raising me to the estate of an angel. Happily I know how to defend my-

self, and to make you love me as you do."

"It is true: I love you, and I want you, as you say, to be perfect. You can be."

"If I wish to be, perhaps. But I don't know whether I do or not. I will think about it."

So I never had the last word with her, and I must every time begin again the process of probing her soul. Occasions were rare; for on the surface, and in the ordinary affairs of life, she possessed a wonderfully, I might almost say an incredibly, even temper, considering her age and position. Never did I have occasion to reprove her for a moment of listlessness, or for the least semblance of resistance to my wishes about her studies. She was always ready, always attentive. In understanding, memory, power of reasoning and penetration, she was very precocious. She seemed to me to be devoid of enthusiasm and sensitiveness; but she was gifted with a rare critical faculty, an extreme impatience of any thing evil, and so high an instinctive sense of honor, that she seemed incapable of understanding that heroism appears difficult, and merits great rewards. I hardly dared to bespeak her admiration for great characters and grand actions. Her face seemed to say, What do you think so astonishing in that? Would you not be impelled to deeds so natural? or is it that you deem me inferior to the lofty characters which fill you with such admiration?

How hope to govern, or even to modify, such a person? I had fought against myself in my life of reverses and sorrows: I had never been compelled to contend with others. What consoled me in my powerlessness was, that M. Dietrich, with all the energy

acquired in his life of work and worry, had no better comprehension than myself of the character of his daughter. To this day I cannot say whether the inconsistencies of her ideas about herself were due to her own indecision, or to an impulse to take the opposite side from that to which one would persuade her. That marvellous power of reasoning which showed itself in her studies, disappeared wholly from her character in its application to her daily life. She had tastes which contradicted each other without her seeming to know it or to be astonished at the phenomenon.

"I wish to make my plans," she would say, "so as to live on good terms with the extremes which I carry about in myself. I love both light and shade, silence and noise. It seems to me that one is happy when one can reconcile contrasts in her nature."

"Yes," I replied: "it is possible to do so in certain cases; but there is the great, the eternal contrast between good and evil, which never find a lodgement in the same soul, without one stifling the other."

"I will answer that when I know what it means. You must permit me, at my age, not to know what evil is."

And she laid her plans so as not to appear to know. If I surprised in her a freak of egotism and cruelty, like that developed in the story of the bird, her face expressed honest astonishment. "I had not thought of that," she would say; but never would she confess that she had done wrong, and was resolved to do so no more. She promised to think about it, to examine the question, and to form an opinion. She thought no one had a right to ask more of her, and protested with great fluency against "imposed convictions."

We remained eight months in the country in a very paradise, and in a seclusion interrupted only by a few visits of ceremony. M. Dietrich devoted himself to his new passion for agriculture, and by and by we saw little of him except at the table. Mlle. Helmina Dietrich was absorbed in her housekeeping cares. Cesarine was thus compelled to live with two old women, — the one very gay (Mlle. Helmina loved to be teased by her niece, who treated her as she would a child), but with no influence upon her; the other serious enough, but irresolute and disquieted. I confess that I dared to do nothing, fearing to irritate unwittingly a self-love which opposition would have exasperated.

We returned to Paris in the middle of winter. Cesarine, who had not exhibited the least sign of impatience at so long a stay in the country, did not give way to her joy at returning to Paris, her much-loved home, and her old acquaintances. But I had sufficient reason to believe that her father was right when he said that she loved the world. Her health, which had not been very good since her mother died, began to revive rapidly. This improvement made her in a short time so beautiful and so fascinating in appearance and manner, that at sixteen she had every attraction of a grown woman. Her understanding made progress with equal rapidity. I noticed how steadily it matured! What she did not learn, she divined by a sort of instinct: art and literature opened to her their pages as if by magic. Her taste became pure. The paradoxes in her nature disappeared. At the end of my year of trial of her, I sought M. Dietrich, and announced my decision.

"I shall remain. I am not neces-

sary to your daughter: no one is necessary to her, or can ever be so; for she is too far above those she will meet. Nevertheless, I can be useful to her, by assisting her in giving play to her good instincts. If it should happen that these instincts lead her astray, I cannot destroy them, and no more can you: but we may together do something to retard their development or to weaken their effect. She tells me so, at least; and she has taken a liking for me, and has begged me earnestly not to leave her. As for myself, I can say that she deserves my attachment to her, even were it necessary sometimes to suffer something through my devotion to her."

M. Dietrich expressed himself highly gratified, and I became more than before a member of the family. I gave up my apartments, which I had held until this time, and brought my modest furniture and family relics, my books and piano, to the Dietrich mansion, where I consented to occupy a very pretty room which I had hitherto discreetly refused to take. It was the chamber of Mlle. Helmina, who now removed to that of her late sister-in-law, and thus occupied an apartment adjoining Cesarine's.

From this time I lived in greater independence than I could have hoped. I could receive my friends without their passing in review before the Dietriches. Their number, to be sure, was limited; but I could see my dear nephew without restraint, and spare him the too critical judgment which Cesarine would probably pass upon the awkward college-boy.

Happily he did not deserve such criticism. It was a great pleasure to me to see the dear boy well grown and in good health. He was not handsome, but he was interesting; and he

resembled my poor sister, — fine dark eyes, tender but penetrating; a mouth delicate and firm; an attractive paleness in his countenance, but not such as is induced by illness; fine, wavy hair, shading a broad and noble brow. He was not to be tall, but he was well formed; and all his movements were graceful, and his voice was charmingly sweet.

He had just finished his studies, and had received his bachelor's diploma. I was very anxious about the career which he ought to follow. M. Dietrich, to whom I had spoken of him, said, "Don't trouble yourself: I will take charge of him. Introduce me to him, and I will find out for what his character and his temperament fit him." But when I wished to present Paul to him, the latter replied, "Not yet, dear aunt, not yet. I did not wish to get through with my studies before deciding about my future. One of my intimate friends is the son of a rich publisher, who has proposed that I enter with him into his father's store as a clerk. At first we shall be paid only board and lodging; but, little by little, we shall get salaries that will increase as time goes on. You know I have an income of six hundred francs. That will be enough to clothe me properly, and enable me to go sometimes to the opera and the theatre. I am very well pleased with my prospects; and, as I have the promise of the place from M. Latour, I ought not to break my agreement."

"But it seems to me," said I, "that, before engaging yourself thus, you should have consulted me."

"Time pressed," he replied; "and I was sure that you would approve. It was decided last night."

"I am not so sure that I do approve. I don't know whether you have taken

the right course or not; and I should like to have consulted M. Dietrich."

"My dear aunt, I do not wish to have a patron. I do not wish to be under obligations to any one before knowing whether I can esteem the man who is to render me a service. You see I am as proud as you could desire. I have thought much about this matter for the past year. It is necessary, I say to myself, that I should decide quickly; and I have no right to dream of a brilliant destiny which will probably not be realized. I vowed to embrace the first honorable career which offered. I have done so. It is not brilliant, and perhaps, thanks to the good wishes of M. Dietrich, not such as you dreamed of for me. It may be that M. Dietrich might have enabled me, by securing me special favor, to leap over some of the steps in my apprenticeship. I don't desire that; and I will not belong to a benefactor, whoever he may be. M. Latour gives me a place because he believes me to be a steady, hard-working young man. He does me, and he shall do me, no other favor. My future is in my own hands, not in his. He has given me no word of sympathy; he has made me no promise of protection. He is a very cold, matter-of-fact man; and he is therefore the man whom I need over me. I shall learn the business with him; and at the same time I shall continue my education. His store is a library, — an always open cyclopædia, — my place of work during the day, my study during my hours of freedom. He has told me that I shall have to read proofs; but I know that he will let me read what I please in my room. That is all the pleasure and all the liberty I want."

Of course I had to be satisfied

with his arrangements. Paul had not yet come to the passionate age. In the full enthusiasm of a boy, he thought he could always be happy with study, and never have any other desire.

M. Dietrich, to whom I recounted our interview, concealing nothing, told me that he augured well of a character of such a stamp, even from the absence of the spirit of heroism in which most young people indulge. He said that it was necessary for every one to try his own wings, and obtain the measure of his powers, and promised that he would interest himself on behalf of my godson whenever I desired it.

I ought to have been satisfied, and I pretended to be so; but the precocious independence of Paul made me a little anxious. I had sad thoughts about the spirit of self-reliance which is spreading among youth more and more. I saw, on the one hand, Cesarine laying her plans to govern everybody; and, on the other hand, Paul coming to a determination, with a perhaps unthinking self-confidence, to be directed by no one. That my pupil, spoiled by fortune, should believe that every thing was created for her was inevitable, — due to her position; but that my godson, struggling with the unknown, should declare that he would carve out his own place, alone and unaided, seemed to me dangerously Quixotic; and I waited for his first check in life as an occasion to lead him to myself as his natural guide.

IV.

LITTLE by little, through the influence of Cesarine, exerted shrewdly and without interruption,

aided by the secret desire of her Aunt Helmina, the relations of the family with society, formed by her mother, were resumed. Exchanges of calls became more frequent. People who had not been seen during the last year were adroitly brought back. Some invitations from the most intimate friends were accepted; and, before the year of mourning had expired, there was talk of returning the courtesies extended, by re-opening the smaller halls, and giving modest dinners to the nearest friends. It was concerted and brought about by the aunt and the niece with so much adroitness, that M. Dietrich only began to suspect after the first victory had been achieved. He was led to believe that the party had been unexpectedly more numerous than had been intended. A second dinner was followed by a little evening party, where there was a little sacred music, — by chance, of course, — at the request of the aunt, who had seen signs of weariness spreading among the guests, and who thought that she ought to adopt some means for entertaining them.

The next week sacred music gave place to secular. The young people of both sexes joined in a little singing. Cesarine had no voice; but she accompanied well. She was indeed a more thorough musician than most of those who pretended to be wrapped up in music, whom she inwardly laughed at, with a mixture of pity and contempt.

Two months later, a heedless young girl began, without thought, at one of these gatherings, to play a seductive waltz. The other young people arranged themselves for a dance. Cesarine did not wish to dance, nor to make others do so; but the waltz went on, nevertheless, to the great delight

of Helmina, and to the astonishment of the servants. When the guests separated, it was with the idea of having a ball before the winter closed.

M. Dietrich was away. He was in the habit of going frequently to his Mireval estate. He was expected the next day. Fate would have it, that, recalled by a business letter, he arrived at seven o'clock in the morning of the day succeeding the *soirée*. We had retired late; the servants were still asleep; and the house was in disorder. M. Dietrich, who had preserved the simple habits of youth, awoke no one; but, after going to his room, he wondered what was the cause of the tardy appearance of the domestics, and went into the little drawing-room where the dancing began. There had been left little traces which led him into the larger hall, where the dance had ended. Having taken a hasty glance, which showed him what had been taking place, in a fit of indignation and displeasure he came to my door, and listened to see if I had arisen. I had. I recognized his step, and went out into the entry expecting reproaches from him.

He did not dare to make them to me. "I see," said he, restraining his anger, "that you have not participated in the follies which you could not repress."

"I beg pardon," I replied: "I had no desire for amusement; but I did not for a moment quit Cesarine, and I was the last to retire. You find me up already because I have not slept. I have been anxious in the thought that it was intended to conceal this little party from you, and in reflecting whether I ought to remain silent, or assume the humiliating office of tale-bearer. We were, M. Dietrich, in circumstances which I could not have

foreseen, and in a struggle with obligations which have never been defined between us. What must I do in the future? I do not believe that I am able to control Cesarine by an exercise of authority; and I will not assume the disagreeable part of repressing all social pleasures. The rôle of spy is still more repugnant to my tastes; and I beg you not to try to impose it on me."

"I see nothing out of the way in your view of duty. You can't prevent any thing, I know; and you will not be a traitor, that I know. But you can use your influence to turn Cesarine from her wayward impulses. Can't you find something to say to her to make her reflect? or has she already openly resisted you?"

I explained that Cesarine had not been instrumental in causing the guests to begin the dance; but she had not resisted their wishes. After the festivities had commenced, she said that she was, as it were, in a dream. Every thing reminded her of her mamma. In the midst of quite a long conversation on the subject we had been interrupted; and, as the guests were departing, Cesarine had promised that the next year her friends should dance as much as they pleased in her father's house.

"Next year!" exclaimed M. Dietrich. "Why, it begins in a fortnight!"

"I had nothing to say," I replied; "and I have neither advice nor instruction to give in the matter."

"But you have an opinion: can you not tell me what you would do in my place?"

"I would engage that Cesarine should not so soon open this house, consecrated to her mother's memory for a year, to the sound of music and the display

of dress. I would make her promise that for another year there shall be no dancing here. She will promise, and she will keep her word. But I would not deprive her of the pleasure of her friends, and of the society of the most intimate of them, without which her life would be too desolate and solitary. Solitude and meditation, without relaxation, have as great dangers for her as pleasure. I should fear that the necessity of submitting too completely to isolation would rather have the effect to create in her such inward opposition, that separation from the world would of itself make her intensely worldly.

M. Dietrich did not reply, and, after a few moments of thought, he left me; but the next day he resumed the conversation.

"I have not reproached her at all," he said. "I pretended to have noticed nothing; and I had no difficulty in persuading her to promise that there shall be no dancing here for a year to come. Cesarine had already come to my opinion through her own reflection. She told me the story of the fête, gently blamed her own want of discretion, to say nothing of the frivolity of her aunt, and confessed that she had promised to tease me to re-open the house, adding that she begged me not to do so. Therefore I could only approve instead of scolding her. She anticipated me, as she always does."

"And you believe that she will always anticipate you?"

"I am sure of it," he replied dejectedly. "She is stronger than I, and she knows it. She will always find some way of putting herself in the stronger position."

"But, if she governs herself by her own best instincts, what does it matter that she does not yield to yours? The

best government possible is that which is never called upon to exercise authority. Will it not be the case, that, of her own free will, she will always find herself in accord with you?"

"You think, then, that a woman can be constantly reasonable, and can consequently obtain the right to throw off every external restraint?"

"I believe that a woman can be guided by reason, because I have always been so without great effort, and consequently without deserving much credit for it. As for the freedom to which that entitles her, without being a pronounced free-thinker, I do regard that as the privilege of perfect and well-tested reason."

"And you think that at sixteen Cesarine is a marvel of wisdom and prudence, who ought to be obedient only to herself?"

"Let us hope that she will become such. Since her desire is neither to obey nor to yield to others, let us encourage her best instincts, and not break her will. Do not become harsh, M. Dietrich, until you can complain of something blamable."

"You surely do not find any thing very tranquillizing in that irresolution which she has confessed to you,—her pretended ignorance of her own tastes and desires?"

"I believe it sincere, at least."

"Take care, Mlle. de Nermont! You are charmed, fascinated. You will only increase her spirit of domination by yielding to it."

He protested in vain. He yielded to it himself, even more than I. The superiority of his daughter, revealing itself to him more and more, placed him in a strange position. She flattered his pride, but she wounded his self-love. He would have preferred to see Cesarine a queen over others, sub-

missive to himself alone. "It will be necessary," I remarked to him, "before leaving this subject, to come to a definite understanding upon one essential point. It is necessary, in order to second your views, if I share them, to know your opinion upon the worldly life which you so much dread on your daughter's behalf. Do you fear that it will be such a dissipation as to make her frivolous?"

"No: she cannot become frivolous. She is more like me than like her mother."

"She does resemble you much. And you therefore have nothing to fear for her safety."

"No: she will not abuse pleasure."

"Then what do you fear?"

He did not know what to reply, and gave several contradictory reasons. I was determined to probe his thoughts to the very bottom; for my part was likely to be difficult if M. Dietrich had not come to a definite decision. I perceived that he was undecided, that he was beginning to know it, and that he showed it in his manner. Cesarine had judged him well. She had said that he wished always to be at war, and that he would never come to terms with any one. He ended the interview by renewedly expressing his deference and attachment to me, and by begging me once again never to leave his daughter until she should be married.

"If I make that promise," I said, "I must be left free to judge for myself what is best, and to act, upon all occasions, under the inspiration of my own conscience."

"Yes, certainly: I expect it to be so," cried he, with the sigh of a man who has been relieved of a great anxiety. "I will abdicate in your favor. To train up a woman, a woman is required."

And indeed from that day there was a marked change in him. He ceased to oppose himself systematically to the impulses of his daughter. I was delighted with this result, which seemed to me altogether desirable. Shall I deceive myself? Was I not unwittingly a conspirator with Cesarine to remove the only obstacle which limited her power? Had M. Dietrich indeed hit the mark when he told me that I was charmed, fascinated, and led a captive by my pupil?

If this weakness was mine, it was a misfortune which serious disappointments caused me to expiate later. I believed sincerely that I was taking the right course, and contributing to the general good, by modifying the obstinate resistance to his daughter on the part of the father. This result, I deemed desirable in every way; for I could no longer hesitate to believe that Cesarine could only be directed by placing the government of herself in her own hands, endeavoring always to make her aware of dangers which she disregarded, or which she regarded as fictitious, and which must be removed from her, or avoided without her knowledge.

The winter passed without any further incident to change or disturb our relations. The ladies received their friends, but there were no undue festivities. Cesarine had much tact and grace, and knew how to repress the guests when the noise of their gayety threatened to come to the ears of her father, who retired early, but never, she said, slept with both eyes closed.

I must now introduce the rest of the Dietrich family. There were, then, three Misses Dietrich, daughters of M. Karl Dietrich,—a pretty trio of well-bred *parvenues*, very proud of

their wealth, and very ambitious, even to the youngest, a miss of twelve, who talked of marriage like a grown person. Her gabble was the amusement of the family; her childish freedom of opinion was the key which opened all discussions upon the brilliant future and the golden dreams of these young ladies.

The father, M. Karl Dietrich, was a portly, jovial man, the opposite of his brother, whom he worshipped as a demigod, and whom he consulted about every thing, but without confessing to him that he did not follow half his advice. He was essentially low-bred, and showed it on all occasions; but he was an honest man, had no vices, and loved his family sincerely. If his business was not the most elevating in the world, it was yet not degrading; and that is something in our day, when the source of riches is rarely considered. He also adored Cesarine, and, by a curious instinct, regarded her as the queen of the family. He did not hesitate to say, that it was not only absurd, but wicked, to oppose a being so perfect. Cesarine knew her power over him: she knew that if she, at fifteen, had been disposed to contract debts, her uncle would have trusted her with the key of his safe. She had in her closets costly dresses, and in her boxes beautiful jewels, which he had given her without his daughters' knowledge; saying that they had no taste, and that Cesarine alone could appreciate such fine things. It was true. Cesarine's taste was excellent; and her uncle felt sufficiently rewarded for his gifts when she praised them.

Madame Karl Dietrich did not fail to observe the partiality of her husband for his niece; and she pretended to approve and share it, but really it caused her pain; and it was easy to

see secret jealousy through the flattery and caresses which she and her daughters lavished upon Cesarine.

There were many distant relatives of the Dietrich family, — some more German than French, others more French than German, intermarried and allied in a curious manner. All who were more or less related to the Dietriches, or to their wives, attached themselves to their fortunes, and sheltered themselves under their wings. The brothers had been generous and willing in the matter; esteeming it a duty to aid their relatives, and being able, thanks to prosperity, to do so without great inconvenience. The famous receptions and balls of Madame Hermann Dietrich had extended their connections with the wealthy greatly, and the house had influence with all the ministers in all administrations. The family constituted a clan, all the members of which were under a certain obligation to the two brothers, to Hermann particularly, and forming thus a little court, the incense of whose flattery could not fail to rise about the head of Cesarine.

I never liked society; and I was not pleased with the little parties which were quite too numerous to justify their being regarded as simply family re-unions. I did not say so, but Cesarine did not fail to perceive it. "We are too plebeian for you," she said, "and I am not surprised at it: for my own part, I find our numerous family very insipid. They have indeed tried to make distinctions among themselves, and to follow different careers; but I think my young cousin the painter as vulgar and as commercial in his instincts as my old cousin the paper-hanging manufacturer; and that my cousin who is a composer of music has no more of the sacred fire than my

John-Bull uncle who runs a cotton factory. I have heard you say that there are no longer any marked distinctions between the various elements of modern society, and that working people talk upon art and literature, as well as artists speak of industry, or of science applied to industry. It seems to me that none of my dear relatives have any ideas at all; and I seek in vain about me for something original or inspired. My mother knew better how to fill her halls. If she admitted a few of our family who now surround us, she also drew in others who added distinction and real elegance to the society. When papa allows me to return to society, without going out of his house, you shall see a collection of people better chosen and more interesting, — people who do not come to approve and applaud, but to discuss and appreciate, — true artists, *real* great ladies, travellers, poets, diplomates, politicians. When I am mistress of this great house, I shall be placed in circumstances which will require tact, attractive conversational powers, real knowledge, and solid talents, and, what I have failed to have thus far, fixed opinions. Let us work, my dear friend, — make me work. My mother contented herself with being a charming woman; but I believe that I have a more difficult rôle to play than to show off elegant diamonds, fine dresses, and beautiful shoulders. I must exhibit a noble spirit, and a character worthy of study. Let us work. My father will be pleased; and he will learn yet that the battle of life is easy to one who has been prepared for it, even without the help of struggle and privation at home."

If I have made Cesarine speak a little more clearly and consecutively than she really did, it is only with the purpose of abridging, and stating in a few

words, the substance of our frequent conversations. I can assert that the *resumé* is at least faithful, and that at eighteen Cesarine had not been diverted from the purpose which is briefly set forth in her words given above.

I will therefore pass rapidly over the years which lead us to that epoch in her life. We passed all the summers at Mireval, where she worked very hard with me, rising early, and losing not an hour. Her seasons of rest from study were short, and filled with activity. She went to see her father in the field or in his library, and interested herself in his work and his researches. He was so much pleased with this, that he became her slave; and that would have been all right enough, if Cesarine had not confessed to me that agriculture did not interest her in the least, but that she wished to please her father, that is to say, to charm him, and bring him into submission.

I should have been afraid that she was playing the same trick with me, if I had not seen that she really loved study, and sought to exceed the sum of knowledge which I had been able to acquire. I soon felt that I was running the risk of being left behind her, and that I also must work on my own account, — not that I failed anywhere as an instructor; but the fire and the facility of youth were no longer mine. My task was thus beginning to absorb and to weary me, when a new phase of my pupil's character began to appear; and her intellectual enthusiasm abated on account of new pre-occupations.

V.

BEFORE entering on this new era of an existence, I ought to recollect my nephew, and to tell briefly his his-

tory during the three years which I pass over. I cannot better recapitulate his character, and describe his life, than by copying the last letter which I received from him at Mireval in the summer of 1858:—

“*My darling Godmother*, — Don’t be uneasy on my account. I am always well, and have never known what it is to be sick. Don’t be angry because I write so seldom. I have so little time to myself! I used to earn twelve hundred francs a year; and my salary is now two thousand, besides my board and lodging. My evenings are always free, and I read a great deal. You will, therefore, see that I am very contented and happy, and that my choice was a good one. In ten or twelve years I shall earn certainly ten or twelve thousand francs, thanks to hard work, and to certain business arrangements which I will explain to you when we meet.

“Now to the great question of your letter. You tell me that you are in good circumstances, and that you wish to *trust* to me (I suppose you mean to *give* me) your savings; so that, instead of being a clerk on a salary, I may associate myself with some one in a certain scheme for improving land. Thanks, my good aunt. You are the angel of my life; but I do not accept, and I never will accept. I know that you have made sacrifices for my education. They were great sacrifices then for you. I ought to have accepted them, and I did, because I was a child: but I hope yet to repay your expenditures; and if, instead of such a plan, I should still allow myself to be indebted to your bounty, I should blush for myself. What! a booby of twenty-one throw himself into the weak arms of a delicate, loving, hard-working woman? Don’t propose it again, unless you wish to

humiliate me, and wound my self-respect. Your position is more precarious than mine, poor aunty. You are dependent upon the caprice of a woman. I haven’t any illusions: I have experience in life. My employer is attached to me because I bring money to his house, and don’t let any go out. You are only an article of intellectual luxury, which can be dispensed with in a moment of impatience or injustice. They may even wound your feelings involuntarily in a fit of ill-humor; and that you would never endure. My future, at least, shall not be in the hands of M. Dietrich. You have been a little angry with me because I refused his protection. You didn’t understand, then, my dear aunt, that I did not wish to depend upon the man upon whom you were also dependent? that I would not wish to expose you to the penalty of having to submit to some angry act of his on account of your determination not to hurt my prospects? I have replied to the invitations to family gatherings, which he has given through you, that I had not the time. But it was only because I knew that in those parties all were more or less indebted to Dietrich; and I should have carried there, in spite of myself, a certain feeling of independence which would have been sure to betray itself by some intolerable act of freedom. And you would have been responsible for my impertinence! That’s another reason for my decision.

“Let things remain just as they are, — I your debtor forever. It might be easy for me to return you the money which you have expended on my account: nothing would repay your tender care, your maternal love,— nothing but my gratitude, which is as great as my heart can contain. You shall remain my mother: you shall never be

my banker. I wish that you might again absolute liberty, without having to fear poverty; and I hope that you will not remain an hour in the house of strangers, if that hour is not passed agreeably to yourself.

"There, aunty, it is said once for all.

"The last time I saw you, you wore a dress that had been turned, and scarcely in keeping with the gorgeous surroundings of M. Dietrich's mansion. I said to myself, 'My aunt needn't so economize a few yards of silk. She isn't mean: she isn't even saving enough on her own account. Is it for me she is so economical? I will not believe it. The next money I have to spare I will use to buy her a new dress.' And I have done so. You will receive to-morrow morning a piece of goods which I think pretty, and which I know is the latest style. It will probably be criticised by the incomparable Cesarine; but I don't care for that if it pleases you. Only I warn you, that, if you turn it when it is no longer new, I shall notice it, and send you another so costly as to ruin me.

"Excuse my poor gift, and love always the rebellious child who cherishes and reveres you.

"PAUL GILBERT."

It was impossible not to be touched by his love and earnestness. Cesarine surprised me in the midst of my tears, and demanded to know the cause. I thought it useless to tell her; but as she persisted, and seemed really hurt by my refusal, I let her read Paul's letter. She read it coolly, and returned it to me without a word.

"I hope you are satisfied," said I.

She replied "Yes;" and we went on with our lesson.

When we had finished our studies,

she remarked, "Your nephew is an original, but his pride pleases me. He is wrong, however, to suppose that his 'freedom' would be displeasing to me. It would come like a ray of real sunshine through the atmosphere of coarse flattery which I breathe in Paris. He thinks me stupid, I see; and when he calls me 'incomparable,' that means, of course, that he thinks me very homely."

"He has never seen you."

"Oh, yes! How do you suppose that he could come and see you during four years, and we not meet? It is of no use for you to live in a room far from mine, and ask him to come on days when I am out. I was curious to see him; and once, two years ago, my three cousins and I were on the watch for him as he crossed the garden. Then, as he passed very quickly, and did not deign to raise his eyes towards the terrace where we were seated, we watched again as he went out, standing on the grand staircase. He bowed as he passed; and, although he looked very proper and very abstracted, I am sure that he looked at us curiously."

"He looked very badly then, or he did not know which of the four was you; for last year he saw your photograph, and seemed surprised, saying that he had supposed you very small, and a brunette. He must have taken your cousin Marguerite for you."

"What did he say about my photograph?"

"Nothing. He was thinking of something else. My nephew is not curious, and I think has very little of the artist in him."

"Say that he is frightfully matter-of-fact."

"'Frightfully' is a little harsh; but I confess that I find him a little rigid in his virtues, — even a little misan-

thropic for one of his age. I ought to try to cure him of his distrust and timidity."

"And you will present me to him next winter?"

"I don't know that I can decide about that. His is a nature in which a good disposition does not drive out obstinacy."

"Then he resembles me?"

"Oh, not at all! he is quite your opposite. He always knows what he wants and what he is. Instead of delighting in influencing others, he shuts himself up to his own rights and his own duty, with a narrowness which I do not always approve, but which I am willing to pardon on account of his other qualities."

"What qualities?"

"Well, integrity, courage, modesty, pride, disinterestedness, and, above all, his affection for me."

We were interrupted by the arrival of the Marquis de Rivonnière. Cesarine glanced at herself in the mirror, and, finding that her toilet was correct, left me to go and receive him.

This will be the appropriate time to introduce to my story this gentleman, who for the last few weeks had been the most assiduous of all our country neighbors; but I think it will be better for me, instead of interrupting the narrative, to let Cesarine paint the man who was now aspiring openly to her hand.

"What do you think of him?" she asked, after he was gone.

"Nothing yet," I replied, "except that he has a fine figure and a handsome face. I do not intrude myself into the drawing-room when neither you nor your father requests my presence, and I have hardly spoken to the marquis more than two or three times."

"Well, for the future, I ask your

dear presence whenever the marquis calls. My aunt is a bad duenna, and allows him to make love to me."

"Your father has told me that he has witnessed with pleasure his attentions to you, and that he will offer no opposition, at least before you have had time to become acquainted. I believe that is agreed between him and the Marquis de Rivonnière. You are to decide if you wish to marry soon; and, in case you do, he will be formally proposed; and he is regarded as both an honorable and a brilliant match. If you do not accept him, word will be given out that you do not yet wish to settle down in life; and M. de Rivonnière will say that he has not been able to induce you to change your mind."

"Yes, that's what papa has *told* me too; but what he *thinks* he has told neither of us."

"What do you suppose he thinks?"

"He earnestly desires that I should marry as soon as possible, on condition that we shall not be parted. My good father loves me, but he fears me also. He wants, while keeping me near himself, to be relieved of the responsibility which weighs upon him. He finds himself forced to indulge me, and he resigns himself to that; but he is all the time afraid that I shall abuse his good-nature. The more studious, retired, in a word, reasonable, I am, the more he dreads an outburst of my imprisoned will into unheard-of eccentricities."

"Do you not encourage this dread by some thoughtless inconsistencies, which you might avoid displaying before him?"

"I encourage this feeling purposely, because it preserves to me the authority which he would resume if he found me too docile. Don't be angry with

me, dear friend: I manage my father for his own good as well as mine. What means I use do not concern you: let your conscience rest easy. My aim is good and laudable. To reach it my father must retain his responsibility, and not delegate it to a new-comer, who would cause me renewed labor to bring him into submission."

"I don't think you would have much difficulty with M. de Rivonnière. He passes generally for a very quiet and mild-mannered gentleman."

"That's no sign. It is easy to be mild towards others when one is very decided in character. I'm of a gentle disposition also; am I not?"

"Tell me what you think of him, then."

"Certainly. He is one who in the time of Louis XIII. or Louis XIV. would have been called a Grand Seigneur, and here is how he would have been described: 'A handsome cavalier, skilful with every weapon, of excellent spirit, agreeable in conversation, of courtly manners, and graceful in the dance.' When that had been said in those days of a man of the world, all was said, and nothing further was to be desired. Women of to-day are more exacting; and I, for instance, should have the right to ask if this magnificent creature had a heart, education, judgment, and domestic virtues. The Dietrich family is honorable if plebeian, and has no low tastes; and, as you who are of a real old family must have noticed, we are not altogether vulgar. That is because we are very honest, and very proud. I presume to unite in myself all the honesty and all the pride of my humble family. The perfections of a gentleman, therefore, affect me but very little, if he has not the virtues of an honest man; and I have never heard what they say of the Marquis de Ri-

vonnière in that respect. I want to believe that my father is not deceived in him; that he has a noble character; that nothing serious against him is known; and that he is charitable, benevolent, universally loved by his poor neighbors, and esteemed by all who know him. But that isn't enough. He is rich, which is a good thing: he won't need my fortune, — at least, that cannot be his motive in seeking me. I want to know what is the nature of his ambition, which is perhaps not an evil one, and which must not be too grasping; thus far I can't penetrate the mystery. Sometimes he appears astonished at my opinions; then all at once he pretends to admire them, to agree with me, and to treat me as a prodigy which puzzles and dazzles him. That's what I call making love to me, and which I will not permit. I want him to let me judge him, to explain his opinions if I shock him with mine, to defend himself if I attack him. My aunt, who is resolved to find him perfect because he is a marquis, prevents me from piquing him when I wish, by hastening to explain my words in the sense most favorable to his vanity. That worries and wearies me; and I want you by me to help me against her, and assist me in seeing through him."

VI.

TWO days afterwards the marquis brought a fine saddle-horse, which he had promised Cesarine to procure for her. He had kept it in his stable for a month to try it and train it. He would keep it for himself, he said, if it did not please her.

Cesarine ran to put on her riding-dress, and then mounted the horse, which she rode admirably. In fifteen

minutes she dismounted lightly; saying to M. de Rivonnière, who had been watching her with rapture, "This horse is an exquisite machine, but he is too highly trained. He has neither will nor instinct: he is too mechanical. If he suits you, keep him: he bores me with his tameness."

"There's a very simple way," said the marquis, "to make him less manageable; that is, to let him forget a little of what he has been taught, by turning him into a pasture. I will agree to make him more fiery."

"Oh! it isn't the lack of fire I complain of. He has no originality. It is with horses as with human beings: education stunts natures which have not inexhaustible resources. I prefer a savage beast, which may possibly kill me, to a well-regulated machine which makes me as sleepy as itself."

"Then," said the marquis, "you prefer a rude but forcible individuality" —

"To a personality extinguished by good-breeding," she replied hotly. "But I beg pardon: I am a little warm with exercise, and I will go and dress."

She turned her back upon him, and returned to the house, gathering up her dress as she went just to the tops of her little boots. M. de Rivonnière followed her with his eyes as if in a sort of revery; then, seeing me near, offered me his arm, while M. Dietrich and his sister followed at a short distance. I saw that the marquis wished to be on good terms with me, for he showed me great deference; and, after broaching the subject with some embarrassment, opened his heart to me. "I think I understand," said he, "that my yielding to her is not pleasing to Mlle. Dietrich, and that she would like in me a more original character, and a

more independent spirit. However, I am altogether sensible of her superiority over me, and I am not dismayed by it: it is something to be counted upon."

What he said seemed to me very sensible, and the language of an intelligent man.

"It is certain," I answered, "that in this age of egotism and scepticism, it is not the way of the world to accept the merit of a superior woman without objection or fear. But may I ask if it is the taste and the respect for such merit in general which actuates you, or if you see in this particular case particular qualities which attract you?"

"Both. I am captivated by the beautiful and the good, — much more by one who exhibits them in her own person."

"Then you are enamoured of Cesarine. Well, you are not the only one. Everybody who comes near her submits to the charm of her moral and physical perfectness. It must be an exceptional devotion, however, which can win her favor."

"I am aware of that. I know the measure of my own devotion, and have no fear that any one will surpass me in that respect; but there are a thousand ways of expressing devotion and love, while the occasions for proving it may be rare and difficult. The expression of love often charms women more than the proof of it; and I confess that I do not yet know in what form to present the future to her, but I would like to promise it as bright and unclouded as possible."

"Don't ask me for advice: I don't know you well enough to give it."

"Know me, then, Mlle. de Nermont. I only ask that. When Mlle. Dietrich interrogates me, I am embarrassed, and perhaps do not tell her

The exact truth. With you I will be less timid, and will answer you with as much confidence as if you were my own sister. Ask me questions: it is just what I want. If you are not pleased with me, you shall tell me so, and reprove me. Whatever comes from your lips shall be a divine command, and I will not rebel."

"Well, then, are you, as they say, of a very pleasant disposition?"

"Usually; but I am sometimes very angry."

"And you cannot contain your anger?"

"That depends. I can repress it generally; but, when my self-respect is wounded, I become insane in my violence and folly."

"What do you do in your madness?"

"How can I know? I never remember, because I have no consciousness of what I am doing."

"Others tell you sometimes, I suppose?"

"Never the truth. I have always been indulged by my family, and from my servants have received nothing but flattery."

"That's a proof that you are really good."

"Is it? Who knows! Perhaps it is only a proof that I am rich."

"Do you so despise human nature? Have you no true friends?"

"Oh, yes! but then they have never so wounded me, and don't even know that I ever become violent."

"That indeed. What should you do if a friend should play false?"

"I don't know."

"And if a woman you loved should refuse you?"

"I don't know that any better. Don't you see that I am yet, as it were, an animal; because I don't know

myself or how to reveal myself to myself?"

"Then you have never made the least self-examination?"

"I try not to repeat my faults; but I do not foresee my liability to error, and I do not believe it possible to foresee it."

"Why not?"

"Because every cause of trouble is new. No circumstances occur identical with those of which we have experience. See, I pray you, in me only what I see in myself,—perfect sincerity in good intentions. It would be easy for me to tell you that I am a good man, and that I would promise always to be such. That is a part of the commonplace which every lover owes to the parents and friends of his betrothed. Well, if I should ever have the rare good fortune to be the betrothed of your Cesarine, I will promise to be as sincere then as when to-day I tell you that I love her. I will not, however, say that I am worthy of her in all respects, and that I deserve to be loved."

"Could you promise to love her always? Are you constant in your affections?"

"Certainly. I am faithful in my friendships; but, in fact, I have never loved any woman but my mother and my sister, and have no knowledge of the love a virtuous wife can inspire."

"What do you say? You have never loved?"

"No: is that remarkable?"

"How old are you?"

"Thirty."

"There's a bad note for my memorandum of you,—never loved, and thirty years old."

"Why, what would you have? Of course I cannot call the feelings of a youth towards every pretty girl love.

It seems to me, however, impossible not to love Mlle. Dietrich with a genuine passion, and not to love her always. Although I feel as though I had been refused by her, and know that she has ill-treated me, I am as much enchanted with her as I was two or three days ago when she gave me a few kind words."

We went into the parlor, where Cesarine, who had walked more quickly than we, and who was active in every thing that she did, was already seated at the piano. She had dressed in exquisite taste, and rose a little abruptly on seeing the marquis enter. A little shade of impatience passed over her face. It was evident that she had not expected him to return. He saw it, and took his leave; and it was several days before he came again.

At first Cesarine declared that she was delighted that she had discouraged him, and then she was vexed at his sensitiveness. She was amiable, then she was cruel. When his sulkiness was over he came again; and then she snubbed him, and he again became sulky. So it went on for months, and it seemed as though the play might last forever.

Cesarine studied him well, and discovered in him great and valuable traits of character, — a real gallantry, a remarkable temperament, true generosity of soul, excellent culture, sterling goodness, and an agreeable manner when he was not repulsed. Indeed, he so little deserved to be snubbed, that he was right in not enduring it from her.

At the end of our stay in the country, M. Dietrich urged Cesarine to explain her feelings towards the marquis.

"I haven't decided," she replied. "I honor and esteem him very much.

If he is contented to be my friend, I shall always see him with pleasure; but if he wishes that I should now, or soon, decide about marriage, I don't want him to come any more, or at least no oftener than our other neighbors."

M. Dietrich would not accept this strange answer. He remonstrated with her, and told her that a woman cannot make a friend simply of a man who is in love with her. "But that's precisely what I mean to do," replied Cesarine. "I find the friendship of men more sincere and more noble than that of women; and, if a woman drives all men away, she finds herself alone with persons of the lovely, jealous, treacherous sex. I have but one female friend, Pauline. I don't want another. There is my aunt, indeed; but she is more my child than my friend."

"But then, for male friends, you have me and your uncle. You ought to be contented with us."

"You forget, papa, some dozens of young and old cousins, who are very cordially attached to me, I am sure, and whom you would like for me to love. Not one of them aspires to my hand. Some of them are married, and fathers of families; the others know too well what is due to you to make love to me. I don't see why the marquis should not do as they do, but for another reason, — the fear of losing me."

"Fortunately the marquis would not accept the ridiculous position."

"I beg pardon, papa. In default of a better, he does accept it."

"Ah, indeed! You said to him, 'Be my pander to the pleasure of existence.'"

"No: I said, 'Be my companion until further orders.'"

"Her companion!" cried M. Dietrich, turning to me with a shrug of the shoulders. "My dear friend, she has become insane."

"Yes, I know it," said Cesarine. "The fact is," bursting into a laugh, "that I haven't common sense. Well, I'll tell M. de Rivonnière that you think me very absurd, and that we musn't see each other any more."

With that she took her work, and began to sew with provoking calmness. Her father watched her a little while, hoping to see anger or sorrow display itself beneath this summary settlement of the question. He saw nothing of the kind: all the disappointment was his. He had taken Jacques de Rivonnière into intimate friendship, encouraged him much, earnestly desired him for a son-in-law. He had not concealed this wish from Cesarine, and naturally she was resolved to improve her opportunity.

When we were alone I scolded her. She listened, as she always did, with an astonished air; and, having allowed me to say all I would, she answered me with playful tenderness, "You are right perhaps. I have given papa pain, and have seemed to force him to tolerate a singular relation between the marquis and myself, or else to cause him to give up a plan which is very near his heart. It is therefore necessary that I should either give up a friendship which is very pleasant to me, or that I should marry a man whom I do not love, and for whom, therefore, I should have neither respect nor sympathy. Is that what is wanted? Perhaps I am equal to the grand sentiment, that one is always happy in doing one's duty, however difficult it may be. Ought I to sacrifice myself, and perform my dolorous and heroic duty? I don't say that I

couldn't. But, frankly, is M. de Rivonnière a person so sublime, and has my father vowed to him such a friendship, that I ought to rivet upon myself this chain in order to please them, and to sacrifice my life, which every one professes to wish to make happy? Say, dear Pauline: this is becoming very serious."

"Authorize me," said I, "to repeat what you have said to your father and the marquis. Both will give up the idea of opposing you. Your father will deprive himself of this new friend; and the new friend, whom you have only persuaded to wait as long as you give him hope, will understand that his patience may compromise your reputation, and result only in disappointment to himself."

"Do as you will," she replied. "I only desire peace and liberty."

"It will be better, since you are so reasonable, that you should yourself tell M. de Rivonnière to put an end to his hopes."

"I have already done so."

"And that you make the sacrifice of dismissing him as well in the interest of his dignity, as of your own reputation."

"He does not agree to that. He asks to see me, however seldom, and on such conditions as it shall please me to impose. He demands to know what makes him unworthy to enter our house. It is for my father to forbid him. I think it cruel and unjust, and I will not undertake the task."

Nothing could make her come to terms. M. Dietrich recoiled from the duty. He did not wish to shut his doors upon the marquis, knowing that they would be re-opened on the first new caprice of Cesarine. Besides, such a course would compel him to

put away forever the hopes he had cherished.

The marquis was therefore authorized to call upon us in Paris, and Cesarine accepted this paternal concession as something due to her, and for which she had no one to thank. Her amiable disposition and gracious manner did not permit us to tax her with being imperious and eccentric. She on her part yielded nothing. She would say, "I love you:" never "I thank you."



VII.

WE returned to Paris at the usual time; and Cesarine, who had arranged her batteries, struck a grand blow, making M. de Rivonnière the pretext. She wanted to induce her father to re-open his parlors, and to draw back the brilliant and numerous society which had filled them while his wife was living. Cesarine argued with him, that, if he restricted her to the companionship of the family, she should never marry, because the appearance of every new suitor would be a great event in their little circle; that, however few were admitted after M. de Rivonnière, she would get the reputation of being a coquette or of one difficult to marry; and that only the general admission of society at large into this little cloister of the faithful could give her an opportunity to examine suitors without entangling herself with them, or being compromised by any one of them in particular. M. Dietrich was compelled to yield to the force of these arguments, so much more worthy than those of his wife, who had been guided in such wishes purely by the love of pleasure. He had yielded with bad grace to his wife; he submitted more gracefully to

his daughter: and a great party was planned to inaugurate the new life which we were about to lead.

I asked Cesarine, the morning after the ball, which had been laboriously prepared and went off magnificently, seeing her still wearied with the excitement of the preceding night, if she was satisfied at last.

"Satisfied with what?" she replied, — "with another experience of the excitement with which I was familiar from childhood? Do you take me for a young girl intoxicated with her first ball? or do you think that the world has changed so much in three years that I no longer know it?"

Notwithstanding numerous and pressing invitations, M. de Rivonnière, on whose account Cesarine had led her father to so important a step and to incur so great an expense, did not profit by the occasion presented. He came neither to the first nor to the second party. His friends said that he was sick. Servants were sent to inquire for his health, and he had left the city.

One day, as I was doing some shopping I met him. We were both on foot. After a little hesitation, I spoke to him. He was not dressed with his usual care. He looked, if not downcast, at least very abstracted. He appeared not to care to answer my questions; and I was about to take my leave of him, when, as by a sudden impulse, he offered me his arm. "I must speak to you," he burst out; "for perhaps Mlle. Dietrich has not told you all the truth about our mutual relations. Perhaps she does not even understand them herself. She is not herself angry with me, and she does not know perhaps that I am angry with her."

This seemed to me a strong way to

describe the rupture of any relations they might have had together; and I said so.

"You think rightly," said he, "that it is difficult to speak clearly of love and marriage to a young lady so carefully watched by you. But when interviews are impossible, correspondence is not: and Mlle. Dietrich has not refused to read my letters; she has even deigned to answer them."

"Are you speaking the truth?" I cried.

"I can prove it. When you were just now about to take leave of me, I felt that I ought to return her letters. Will you permit me to have them carried to you this evening?"

"Certainly. In this you act like a gentleman."

"No: I act like a man who wants to cure himself of a false hope. The letters sent to me by Mlle. Dietrich might be read in a public assembly, so pure and cold are they. She hasn't asked me to return them. I doubt if she has ever thought of doing so. If the act of writing them was an imprudence, the manner of doing so is on her part a guarantee of its safety. She is able to explain her feelings, and say every thing that she wishes, without giving her correspondent the least advantage, and without giving her victims the least chance to blame her."

"Then, why are you angry with her?"

"I am vexed at the impossibility of pleasing, and at my own want of courage. At one time I was deceived when I saw that she was intriguing to allow me a place as an intimate friend. She offered me that position; and I was fool enough to persuade myself that a young person like herself would not accord it to a suitor for her hand, who

was nevertheless destined to be supplanted by another. I let her see my stupid confidence; and she rallied me on it, and said that she was going to re-enter society, and only held on to me to enable her to do so. That made me indignant. I was wounded to the quick. I have renounced her; and you can tell her so."

"She will not believe it. Neither do I believe it."

"Well, then, let me tell you that I have placed an obstacle—a fault—between her and myself. I have thrown myself into an adventure, stupid, culpable even; but it diverts me, absorbs me, and prevents me from reflecting. That's better than to be a fool, or to be degraded by slavery to a woman like Mlle. Dietrich. There, my confession's made: this evening you shall have the letters. I am going back into the country, where I am hiding my foolish amour, only a few miles from Paris, while my friends believe me absent in Switzerland."

That evening I received from the marquis a little package very carefully sealed, which I placed in Cesarine's bureau. She would have felt very badly to have seen me in possession of this little secret. She did not know at first how the restitution had been brought about.

She did not speak of the matter at first; but about a week afterwards she told me about the affair, and asked me if I supposed that the letters had passed through her father's hands. I re-assured her on that point. "They may have been brought back," said I, "by the person who acted as your go-between in this correspondence."

"There was no such person," she declared. "I am not such a fool as to trust to my servants. We exchanged letters at each interview. He brought

his in a bouquet, and found mine in a certain music-book on the piano, which he would pretend to look over in a careless manner. He played that comedy well enough."

"And yet you asked me to be present at your interviews! Why write to him in secret, when you had only to make a sign to me to go away when you wanted to speak to him in confidence?"

"Oh! I don't know. The mystery of it amused me. And what would papa have said if I had caused you to fail in your duty? Come, don't scold me; for I have already blamed myself enough. Tell me how those letters came there. He must have taken somebody into his confidence. If I believed it was" —

"Don't accuse any one. It was myself."

"Indeed! Then you have seen him?"

I told her all, concealing only the means which M. de Rivonnière had adopted to cure himself of his attachment for her. That was a kind of explanation which one does not at this day make very freely to young girls, and which I had never wished to make to Cesarine, nor even before her. Her aunt was prudent only on this delicate point; and M. Dietrich, pure in his morals, was equally so in his language. Cesarine, therefore, notwithstanding her liberty of spirit, was very ignorant of the prurient details which are so shocking when first revealed to a young girl.

Cesarine supposed that the change on the part of the marquis was due to his having determined, in his hasty spite against her, to marry some one else. She seemed to be much hurt by it. "You see," said she, "I was right in doubting him, and in refusing to re-

spond to his fine sentiments. He said that he should die if I took away all hope. I allowed him a little hope, and you see he is already cured of his attachment to me. Wait a minute: I'll show you his letters. We will read them together. It will be a good lesson to me. It's a first experience which I don't want to forget."

The letters of the marquis were written in a good style, although evidently without extraordinary care. I thought I could see in them the enthusiasm of very sincere love; and I could not help saying so. Cesarine laughed at me, and declared that I knew nothing about it: that I was reading what was a romance only in appearance, and that, as for herself, she had never been deceived by it. When we had finished reading the letters, she made as though she would cast both his and her own into the fire; but she thought better of it, collected them, tied them up with a black ribbon, and placed them in a corner of her bureau-drawer, sneering at the funeral of the first love which she had inspired. But I saw a great tear roll down her cheek, and thought to myself that all was not yet over between herself and M. de Rivonnière.

The winter passed, and he did not appear. A dozen other suitors presented themselves, offering a choice of age, rank, character, wealth, and disposition. Not one of them was encouraged, although no one was absolutely refused. Cesarine wished to establish a court about herself; but she allowed no direct homage to be paid her, especially at home. She delighted to show herself in public, with her admirers at a respectful distance. She allowed many to follow her, few to approach her.

We passed the summer at Mireval and at the seashore. We met M. de

Rivonnière again at the baths; and he bound his chains upon himself once more as if he had never broken them. He asked me if I had betrayed his secret. "No," I replied: "it was not of a nature to be betrayed. However, if you ever marry Cesarine, I shall require that you first confess to her; for I will not be your confidant in this."

"What!" he cried, "must I recount to a young girl, whose purity is sacred to me, the foolish adventures which a boy hardly tells to his comrades?"

"No, of course not; but if you are blameworthy, as you told me you were" —

"So much the more reason for keeping silent."

"It is against Cesarine that you have sinned; for you came back to her with a stain which you had not formerly."

"Well, so be it. I will confess when it is necessary. But, in order to have the courage for it, I must see that I am loved. Until then I am bound to nothing. I have rid myself of my encumbrance, and am free again. I have sacrificed to Cesarine a little love-scape that was amusing enough at the time. What would not any one do to gain her love?"

But did Cesarine love him? From the pleasure she showed at having her chains upon him once more, one might have inferred that she did. She had really grieved at his absence. Her pride had been sorely wounded. She did not, however, let that appear, but received him as if he had parted from her only the night before: that was his punishment, and he felt it as such; and, when he wished to revive his hopes, she did not receive his requests with reproaches, but gave him exactly his position of the year before, — promises and assurances of friendship, a command not to speak of love. He

consoled himself with the reflection that he was still the most favored of those who rendered homage to his idol.

I will here bring to an end the long and tedious history which I have been compelled to relate, of the events and of a situation which lasted until the time when Cesarine attained her majority. I intended to have cut short the story of the five years which I devoted to her instruction; and, indeed, I have omitted purposely to speak of several journeys, to give descriptions of places which she visited, and to mention persons of secondary importance, who had some influence on her character. Such matters would have led me too far. I come now to the events which seriously affected our several lives, but which could not have been understood if I had not made this analysis of a most remarkable character, whose development I had watched from day to day all through these years.

VIII.

I RESUME my story at the time when Cesarine reached her majority. Already had her father emancipated her to some extent by abandoning his intention of controlling her actions, and by putting her in the enjoyment of the fortune left by her mother, which was very considerable.

I had now devoted six years to her education: and I can truly say that I had taught her nothing; for in every thing her intelligence had far outstripped my ability to instruct her. As for her moral education, I do not know yet whether I ought to claim credit for it, or to assume responsibility for the good and the evil which were in her. The good, at that period, ex-

ceeded the evil; but I often had hard work to distinguish between them. Perhaps she was really only playing a trick upon me in pretending indecision.

One thing is certain. At the end of these six years I loved Cesarine with a sort of maternal passion, although I would indulge in no illusion as to the kind of love she bore me. It was graceful, charming, seductive on her part; devoted, solicitous, tender on mine; and it seemed as though our friendships were completed by what each brought to the other.

However, the happiness which was given to me by Cesarine and her father did not fill all the longings of my heart. There was one person, and one only, whom I preferred to them, and whose companionship would have been more sweet to me than theirs: of course I mean that of my nephew. Paul Gilbert. It had been for his sake that I became a member of the Dietrich family; and, if he had hinted at the slightest desire that I should do so, I should have quitted it, to join my poverty to his, since he still protested vigorously and with all his energy against profiting at all by what I might do for him. I decidedly did not like society, and not more the large group of those whom Cesarine called her intimate friends than the brilliant throng which was occasionally gathered in the drawing-rooms. My happiest hours were those passed in my own room with two or three of my own friends and my dear Paul, when he could tear himself away from his engrossing daily cares. I saw him less than the others of my own friends; and it was a great privation. Several times I spoke to him of renting a little room near his place of business, in order that at least he might dine with me.

But he invariably refused to make the slightest change in his manner of life. "You would not like to dine with me," he said; "for I sometimes have only five minutes to eat what is set before me; and I never have the time to know what I am eating. I see you think that very bad for me, my good aunt. You think that it is a very bad habit; that I ought to be thinking of having a house of my own; and that I ought to take an hour for dinner. But I cannot lose a moment. I don't dream: I act. I don't walk: I run. I don't smoke; I don't gossip; I don't dream, even when I am asleep. I go to bed early, and rise early. I am working to earn twelve thousand francs a year: I get four already. As I get better paid, I shall have less drudgery, and not such absorbing work. That isn't just; but it is the law of work, — to the weak the struggle."

"And when are you likely to earn a thousand francs a month?"

"In ten years."

"And when are you going to have leisure?"

"Never! Why should I have rest? Work wearies only the lazy and the stupid."

"I should hope by the privilege of resting to gain an opportunity to occupy myself according to the necessities of my intellect."

"I get that opportunity in the way of business. My employer publishes no frivolous works. I have read so much while with him, that I am not an ignoramus. Seeing that my knowledge is useful to him in judging of new books offered to him for publication, he allows me to follow that line, and to be more occupied with learning than with questions of the shop. When I oversee his store, do errands for him, run to the printer, correct

proofs, and do other work of the kind, I am a machine, I grant: but these duties serve to preserve my health; and I contrive always to have a book before me when a minute of respite is allowed. My employer adopts the motto, 'Time is money;' and accordingly he supplies me with a carriage for my longer errands: and so, while crossing Paris with the greatest rapidity, I have studied mathematics, and mastered two or three languages. You see I am happy; for I am developing myself according to the promptings of my disposition."

There was nothing to say in reply to this young stoic. I was proud of him, for he knew a great deal; and when I questioned him for my own personal profit, I was delighted with the promptness, the clearness, and the intelligence of his answers. I was charmed by his learning, his modesty, his courage; and I felt a sort of reverence for him; but I was disquieted in spite of myself by the perpetual strain upon his mind, insatiable in its craving for knowledge.

His youthful austerity alarmed me. His plain but interesting face was stamped too early with a certain sad rigidity and firmness. It was impossible to know whether he ever experienced physical or intellectual weariness. He declared that he did not know what pain was, and wondered at my anxiety. He had never known a desire, nor felt a regret, for certain advantages which fate had denied him. Although as it were a slave to his daily tasks, and in pecuniary circumstances by no means independent, he made his position one of entire liberty by accepting it as meeting all his tastes and satisfying all his instincts.

M. Dietrich often questioned me about him; and I was not able to con-

ceal the anxiety which I felt every time I spoke of the dear boy. But little by little I learned to refrain from expressing my secret sorrow on his account; because when I did so M. Dietrich would offer to better Paul's condition, and that Paul would refuse in so haughty a manner, that I was driven to my imagination to invent untrue excuses for his refusal.

Cesarine was not deceived; and she felt really annoyed by the shyness of my nephew. She attributed it to some strange prejudice which he had taken against her father or herself. She inclined to the opinion that she was the victim of his prejudice, and was irritated, looking upon Paul's supposed dislike as, in a manner, an intentional offence against her. It was difficult for her to conceal the impatience she felt in speaking of a man, who, never having seen her, — for he had never been willing to be presented to her, and contrived never to come to my room when she was there, — could nevertheless urge the lightness of her spirits as an argument against her. He only acted thus to be on the opposite side from everybody else, she said; for, whether she were really something or nothing, all who came near her were pleased with her, found her amiable and good, and assured her that she was at least not of the common sort. She did not, she continued, ask praise or homage from any one; but hostility and prejudice irritated her. "All that I can admit for you is that your nephew affects originality, or that he is a little out of his head."

I saw her anger rising; and at last she came to the point of asking me, with a pettish manner altogether unusual to her, why I had spoken ill of her to my nephew. I answered by laughing at her insinuations. "You

know well," I said, "that I can never be tempted to speak ill of any one I love. The refusal of Paul to all your invitations is due to other causes, far less serious, but which it would be hard perhaps for you to understand. For one thing, he is like me, — he doesn't like society."

"Of that you know nothing," she answered, "nor he either. He has never tried it."

"All the more reason why he should dislike to show himself here. He is not so ignorant as not to know that he ought to bring here, if he comes, some understanding of society, good manners, good language, and attention to dress. He has not learned the vocabulary of the drawing-room; and he would hardly know how to make a bow."

"Then he ought to learn it in his book-store and in his visits to authors. You cannot make me believe that he is a boor in language and manners. His face tells a different story. There is some other reason."

"No: indeed I have told you the chief reason, — his dress. Paul cannot clothe himself like a gentleman without making a sacrifice."

"And you cannot make him accept even a black coat and a white cravat!"

"I could not make him accept a brass pin; and, besides, he hasn't time to spare. I am lucky if I see him one hour in a week."

"He is playing a trick upon you! I will engage that he has his follies like any one else. The Marquis de Rivonnière was not prevented from having his by his passion for me; and your nephew isn't always up to his ears in study."

"But he is; and he has no follies, I am sure."

"Then he is a saint; or perhaps he's

a pedant, too well satisfied with himself to excite interest in any one else."

This bitter speech hurt me a little notwithstanding the caresses and the excuses of Cesarine to make me forget it. My family honor was now at stake, and I resolved to show the Dietrichs that my nephew was no pedant. And this was a grave mistake in my life, which I was urged by a sudden impulse of anger.

A great fête was preparing for Cesarine's twenty-first birthday. On that day, her father was to give her, besides the full possession of all the property of her mother, an income from his own estate, and was thus to give her a dowry, as it were, although she would not yet make choice of a husband. She had showed such an aversion to dependence in the every-day details of life, even to the point of often depriving herself of what she wanted, rather than ask for it, that M. Dietrich had thus broken, of his own accord, this last link of filial dependence. Cesarine had attained her object, which was to bind him with her chains, and to make him love the fetters. He was henceforth — this austere father, this close reasoner — the most devoted and most submissive of her subjects.

She accepted his gifts with her accustomed grace. She was not fond of money; but she treated it as a blind slave which is abused because it does not obey quickly enough. She made a hundred plans for pleasure, but not one of marriage. M. Dietrich was so subservient, that he had persuaded himself that he no longer wished to see her married.

In the evening, there was a great ball, and Paul consented to attend. I extorted from him this sacrifice, telling him that they had attributed to some secret dissatisfaction on my part, which

had confided to him, his objection to go to the Dietrich mansion. The objection did not exist, and the reasons which I had given to Cesarine were true. There were other reasons of which I was ignorant, but they were wholly different from any thing that Cesarine had imagined. The difficulty about Paul's dress was soon disposed of. Young Latour, who was about Paul's size, clothed him from head to foot. The total absence of any pretensions on his part resulted in his wearing the costume so new to him with entire ease. He presented himself without awkwardness; and, if he lacked experience, he had enough tact not to show it. The Dietrich brothers were much pleased, and congratulated me on having such a nephew, after a short conversation with him. I knew that it was their kindness to me which made them say what they did, as much as it was Paul's bearing: but Cesarine, more prejudiced, would be harder to suit; and I do not know what fatality it was which induced me to try to overcome her prejudices.

She was radiant both in her dress and in her own beauty, when, crossing the room, followed with admiration by her train of friends and suitors, she found herself face to face with Paul, whom I led towards her to be introduced. Paul was not a little curious to see thus in all its brilliancy "the much-praised star," as he termed Mlle. Dietrich; but his was a curiosity altogether philosophical, and as cool as that with which he would have set himself to study a rare manuscript or a problem in archæology. Cesarine's eyes had in them something audacious, and even defiant; and her look alarmed me. As soon as Paul had made his bow, I drew him by the arm, and led him away from her. I had a quick pre-

sentiment of dreadful consequences which might follow my imprudent act. I was upon the point of saying, "It is enough; go now:" but, in the crowd which pressed about the queen of the ball, I was quickly separated from Paul; and as I was the acting mistress of the ball, and charged with the entertainment of all the insignificant persons whom Cesarine did not condescend to notice, I lost sight of him for more than an hour. All at once, as I was crossing, to give some orders, a little passage-way so full of flowers and shrubbery that it had been made dark and secluded, I saw Cesarine and Paul seated alone in this solitary corner, almost concealed by the branches of a great bush which had been placed there. They were upon a sofa, and Cesarine was fanning herself as though she had been compelled by the heat to separate herself from the crowd; Paul like a man who had been captured, and held by force when he wished to escape.

"Ah! you come just in time," cried Cesarine, seeing me approach. "We were speaking about you; sit down. If you don't, all my choler will rise again when I am left alone again with your nephew. Just think, my dear, that he swears on his honor that I am totally uninteresting to him, seeing that he does not know any thing about me. Of course, the thing is impossible. You haven't given up six years of your life to stand in the place of sister and mother to me without ever having spoken of me to him as you have spoken of him to me. I know him well enough. I know him by what you have told me of his occupations, his character, his health, and every thing that interests him. I can tell you how many colds he has had, how many books he has read, how many

prizes he took at college, what virtues he possesses" —

"But," gayly interrupted my nephew, "you can't tell how many lies I have told my aunt so as to get candy when I had a cold, or to give her a high opinion of me when I passed my examinations. As for myself, I couldn't tell how much was due to the illusion of maternal love when she praised her brilliant pupil. So perhaps you do me no more honor in knowing me than I do in my appreciation of you."

"You are not polite," said Cesarine with angry dignity.

"That's very true," he replied in an incisive tone. "I am not more gallant than the furniture or the statuary in this fairy palace. My part is like theirs, — to hold the place assigned to me, and to have no opinion upon the things or the persons which I am expected to see before me."

"And which, really, you do not see?"

"And which, really, I do not see."

"Because you are dazzled?"

"Because I am near-sighted."

Cesarine arose with an air of impatience, which she did not try to hide. It was the first time that I had ever seen her so excited; and so I was too much bewildered to attempt a plan for improving the aspect of affairs. "My dear friend," said she, roughly snatching away her fan, which I was holding mechanically, "your nephew is very intellectual, but he is ill-natured. I solemnly assure you, that, in giving him an appointment here in this passage-way, I came to him as a sister to a brother whose character she does not yet know. He is your adopted son, as I am your adopted daughter. We have both travelled, he in his path and I in mine, on the journey of life; and we have both acquired already some

experience of men and things, about which we might have chatted in a friendly way. You see how he has received me. I have been obliged to make all the advances, thanks to you; but now you must allow me to repudiate every thing I have done. His aversion for me is so open and pronounced, that I owe it to myself to be interested in him no more."

I wanted to answer; but Paul squeezed my arm so hard, that I could not help crying out.

Cesarine observed it; and smiled with an expression of disdain which was not very different from hatred. She went away, but Paul held me back still. "Let her go, aunt! let her go!" he said as soon as she was gone. And then he continued vehemently, "I tell you that that girl is mad or wicked. She is accustomed to rule everybody, and she wishes to put her foot on everybody's neck."

"No," said I. "She is good. She is a spoiled child, and a little coquetish; that's all. What does that matter to you?"

"Very true: what does it matter to me?"

"What makes you tremble?"

"I don't know. Do I tremble?"

"You are as angry as she. Come, what was the cause? What was she saying when I came? Had she really made an appointment with you there?"

"Yes: a servant brought me, just as I was going to leave the ball, a little note — Have I lost it? — No: here it is — look: 'In the little passage-way arranged as an arbor, behind the largest bush, at once.' Aunt, did you write that?"

"Never; but it looks like my hand. When I came here, Cesarine wrote very badly. She liked my handwrit-

g, and has copied it so long, that she as come to imitate it exactly."

"Then she did give me this rendezvous, or rather, to be more exact, this summons to appear at her bar. I was deceived; for I supposed that you had something important to say to me.

I threw down my overcoat, which I had already taken on my arm, and ran here. She was seated on this sofa, flashing light from her be-spangled fan into the dark shade of this arbor. I had not seen her from a distance, and only recognized her when she made me a sign to sit down beside her, saying in an unconstrained manner, 'If any one comes, I will go this way, and you that; for it is not usual for a young girl to arrange a private interview with a young man in this way, and I might be blamed. I do not blame myself, however; and that's enough for me. Now listen: I know that you don't like me, and I wish your friendship. I won't go until you promise it to me.' Perfectly astounded at this, but still not believing that so audacious a piece of coquetry could be real, I replied that I could not like a person without being acquainted with her; and that, not being able to get acquainted with her, I could not like her."

"And why not get acquainted?"

"I haven't time."

"You think it will take a long time?"

"Very likely. I don't know any thing of the Babel which is called society: I understand neither its language, its manners, nor its silence."

"Then in me you see only a woman of society."

"Isn't it in society that I find you?"

"Why have you never been willing to see me at home?"

"My aunt has told you, of course. I have no leisure."

"You find time, nevertheless, to converse with authors and such people. Some of them are here. I have asked them if they know you; and they said that you were a very promising young man" —

"In business?"

"In every respect."

"And you wanted to find out for yourself?"

"That is too bad. You cannot believe me capable of such a motive?"

"It is because I believe you capable of it, that my little pride refuses to be subjected to the test."

"She did not say any thing at first," said Paul: "but then, resuming that play with her fan which reminded me of a squirrel turning in its cage, cried, 'Do you know, sir, that you have hurt me very much?'"

"I arose in alarm, fearing that I had trodden upon her foot. 'You don't understand,' said she, bidding me be seated again. 'I have been brought up with generous ideas. I have been taught benevolence like a sister of charity; and I am now, for the first time in my life, face to face with a suspicious and prejudiced man. All injustice is revolting to me, and makes me indignant. I would like to know the cause of your aversion.'"

"In vain I protested, in the politest manner I could assume, my utter indifference to her in any way. She replied to me with strange sophisms. Indeed, my dear aunt, you have never told me the truth about your pupil. Upright and simple as I know you to be, that perverse girl must have made you suffer martyrdom; for she is perverse, I assure you. I can find no

other word to express it. It is impossible for me to repeat our conversation; for it is confused in my brain as an extravagant dream. But I am sure that she told me I was in love with her, and that my distrust of her was only jealousy. And when I denied having preserved any remembrance of her face, she told me that I lied, and that I might as well confess the truth, because I would not offend her by so doing, knowing as she did, she said, that between persons of our age friendship for man began inevitably, invariably, with love for woman.

"I asked, a little roughly perhaps, if this fatality was reciprocal. 'Happily, no,' she replied with a mocking, almost bitter tone, which neutralized a glance that was intended, without doubt, to transfix me. Then understanding that I was not dealing with a little fool, but with a great coquette, I said to her, 'Mlle. Dietrich, you are too strong for me. You claim that a pure young girl can permit herself to run after men without ceasing to be pure. That may be the morals of the world, which I don't know, and which I will never know; for, thanks to you, I have discovered that I should be very much out of place in it, and should not like it at all.' If I did not say this in those very words, that was what I expressed, and clearly enough to provoke the anger which she was exhibiting when you arrived on the scene.

"And now, aunt, can you say that she is only a spoiled and rather coquettish child? I say that she is already a corrupt and very dangerous woman to one who is not altogether on his guard. She thought that I was not, but she found her mistake. I did not know her. I was totally indifferent to her: now, if she were to talk

with me, and question me, I might tell her frankly that I had a strong antipathy against her."

"That is precisely why, my dear boy," I replied, "you should not any more expose yourself to her questioning. You must go now; and, whenever you come to see me again, you must knock three times at the garden-gate. I will open to you myself, and together we shall be able to defend ourselves against the enemy, if she is present. I see that Cesarine has made you afraid; and I am aware that all opposition irritates her, and that she is capable of being very obstinate. Such as she is I love her; you know that! One is not occupied with the care of a child for six years, without becoming attached to her, whatever she may be. I know her faults and her excellencies. I was wrong to induce you to come here, because the result is an increase of your repugnance for her, and because she is to blame for the result. I entreat you, by your love for me, to think no more about it, and to forget the absurdities of this evening as if you had dreamed them. Can you do so?"

"Certainly, my dear aunt: I think I have already done so."

"I need not tell you also that you owe it to my affection for Cesarine, never to relate to any one the silly adventure of this evening."

"I know it. I am neither a fool nor a tell-tale; and I am well aware that the laugh would be upon me. I am going now; and you will not see me again for several days, weeks perhaps. My employer is going to send me to Germany on business; and that is very fortunate just now."

"Yes, for Cesarine, perhaps. She will have time to repent of her fault and forget it. As for you, I suppose

that you don't need time to get over the childish folly."

"Aunt, I understand: you think me too much excited, and you are troubled by it. I will not leave you without re-assuring you, although the explanation is a delicate matter. Neither my mind nor my heart has been disturbed by the language of Mlle. Dietrich. On the contrary, both my heart and my mind are repelled by her type of woman. More, my eyes are not captivated by the beauty which is the expression of such a character. In a word, Mlle. Dietrich does not please me at all. But handsome or not, a woman who offers herself to a man of my age, especially when she does so for the purpose of mocking and deceiving him, thrusts trouble upon him. One may handle the embers of love without being consumed, but not without burning his fingers. That irritates, and makes one smart. Now, I confess that I feel like a man stung by a wasp; that's all. I am not afraid of another attack; but even to fight against such an enemy is so puerile, that I will not expose myself to a second sting. I ought to respect the wasp on your account; and I cannot crush it. This battle with fans would drive me mad. I don't desire to renew it. My indignation is gone. I am going away very calm, as you see. You may rest easy too. I swear to you that Mlle. Dietrich shall not make shipwreck of my life, and that two hours hence, when I am correcting my proofs, I shall not miss noticing a single comma."

He was indeed calm; and we separated.

When I returned to the ballroom, I found Cesarine dancing with the Marquis de Rivonnière, and seeming very gay.

IX.

THE next morning, she came to my room. "Do you know the latest news from the ball?" she asked. "They found fault because I was covered with diamonds. The gentlemen told me that I hadn't enough of them, they became me so well; but the ladies were angry because I had more than they; and my good friends told me, with tender solicitude for me, that I was wrong to affect the extravagance of a woman while I was only a young, unmarried lady. I answered, as I had made up my mind to do, 'I am of age to-day; and I am not even sure that I ever wish to marry. I own diamonds which are vainly waiting for my wedding-day; and I am tired of seeing them glittering in my jewel-box. I gave them their freedom to-day; but, if they do not look well upon me, I will imprison them again. Do you think they do not become me?' This question brought down upon me a storm of compliments; but, on the part of my good lady friends, it was a snow-storm. Then I saw that my triumph was complete; and my jewels are not to be punished."

"I supposed," said I, "that you would have had something more serious to speak about."

"No: that is the most serious event of my birthday."

"Not in my opinion. The appointment with my nephew was a pleasantry, I know, but it was very wrong; and I am exceedingly displeased with you."

Cesarine was not accustomed to be reproached in this straightforward manner; the whole effort of her life having been to have her own way, without giving any one a pretext for blaming her. She was stupefied, and fixed

her big blue eyes upon me without finding a word with which to confound me for my boldness.

"My dear child," I resumed, "it is not your governess who speaks to you; for I am so no longer. You are your own mistress, emancipated from all constraint; and, as your father must have told you that henceforward I shall be paid no salary for a work which I have finished, there are between you and me only the bonds of friendship."

"You are going to leave!" she cried, casting herself on her knees before me with a movement so quick, and so full of grief, that I was much touched; but I feared that it was only one of those little dramas which she played so naturally, only to laugh at her success an hour later.

"I do not intend to leave you for that," I replied, "at least" —

She interrupted me with a reproach for my formal manner of addressing her. "You don't love me any more! If you talk so, I will not listen. I will go to my room and have a good cry."

"Well, I will not leave you unless you force me to by making sport of all my devotion and love."

"How could I think of such a thing?"

"I have told you that it is not the governess who speaks. Now, it is not even the friend, but the aunt of Paul Gilbert. Do you understand me now?"

"Ah, good gracious, your nephew! Why, what is the matter with him? Have I, without meaning it, made him in love with me?"

"You did mean it," I answered, offended by the secret joy which the smile with which she had spoken betrayed. "It would have been a fine vengeance upon his insubordination;

but he will not allow you to taste the pleasure of the gods. He is not, and he never will be, in love with you. You have lost your pains; and one loses prestige in laying aside dignity."

"Did he say so?"

"Yes; and he did not forbid me to repeat it to you."

"The fool!" she said, with a burst of laughter that was terrible to hear.

"Yes, yes," I continued. "I heard the menace; and I know you better than you think. You suppose that I am so captivated by you that I can see only the better side of your character; but I am a woman, and am not without some discernment. I love you for your good qualities; but I see your great faults, or I ought to say your great fault, for there is but one, and yet it is a terrible one."

"Too great self-esteem, isn't it?"

"Yes; and I fear very much for you on account of it. It is war to the death which you have undertaken against this wretched rebel, whom you deem incapable of resistance. You are mistaken: he will resist. He has one weapon which you have not, — the wisdom of modesty."

"Which is quite the opposite of the frenzy of over self-esteem? Well, if I am as dreadful a character as you say, you will kindle the flame of my will by showing me some one stronger than myself. But don't be uneasy, Pauline: I am not the heroine of a drama or a romance, as you think. I am a woman both frivolous and serious: I love a contest for the mastery. Vengeance is delicious to me, but pardon is not less so; and just as soon as you ask forgiveness for your nephew, I will stop worrying him."

"I shall not beg pardon of you; but you ought to ask it of me for the wicked trifling which did not succeed,

but which you wished to be successful, even at the expense of making me unhappy by wounding him whom of all the world I love best. For this premeditated, and therefore blameworthy act, I will never forgive you until you have repented of it."

I had never before spoken thus to Cesarine; and she was almost offended at my severity. I saw her turn pale with chagrin, shame, and vexation. She still tried to contend. "Those are harsh words," she said with an effort; for her lips trembled, and she stammered. "I don't receive orders, you know; and I regard myself as relieved from every duty when one tries to impose law upon me."

"I shall make one law for you, nevertheless. Give me your word of honor to renounce your wicked design, or I go away, never to return."

She burst into tears. "I see how it is," she cried: "you seek a pretext to leave me. You have neither charity nor tenderness for me. You do all you can to irritate me, so that I may forget myself, and speak one unkind word; and then you can declare that you have been insulted. Well, this is all I will say. You are cruel; and you break my heart. It is all the work of M. Paul: he has not understood me; he is my enemy; he has calumniated me to you. He is jealous of your affection: he wishes it all for himself. He is perfectly contented because he has made me lose it. Then, since this is so, hear my justification, and withdraw your malediction. Your Paul is not a plaything for me: I seriously desire his friendship. In asking it, I feel my own friendship springing up so earnest, so sudden, that perhaps it is love."

"Be silent!" I screamed: "you are lying now, and that is worse than all!"

"Since when," she answered, rising up with a majestic dignity, "have you believed me capable of descending to a lie? Will you know all? Know all, then! I love Paul Gilbert, and I wish to marry him!"

"Good gracious! That is indeed a new idea! Enough, my poor girl! Don't become foolish to justify your wrong-doing."

"What is there in my idea so strange and wild? Am I not old enough to know what I think? and am I not free to love whom I will. Wait, and you shall see!"

And she ran towards her father, who was just seeking us to carry us to sail on the lake. "Listen, darling father," said she, throwing her arms around his neck. "I don't want to sail: I want to get married. Do you consent?"

"Oh, yes, if you love any one!" replied he unhesitatingly.

"I do love some one."

"Ah! the marquis" —

"Not at all. It is not the marquis who pleases me. He whom I love has no title. Is that all right?"

"Certainly."

"He is not rich: he has nothing. That makes no difference, does it?"

"Not the least; but I wish him to be pure, intelligent, industrious, a man of real merit, and, in one word, earnest."

"He is all that."

"Young?"

"Twenty-three or twenty-four."

"Then he's too young, — a mere boy."

I stopped Cesarine from replying. "He is a mere boy," I replied myself; "and consequently he is only a brave youth, whose merit has not yet borne its fruit. Don't listen to Cesarine: she is mad this morning. She has just

taken one of the most insensate, most absurd, and most impossible of all her caprices. She caps the climax of her folly in speaking of it before me. It is a lack of regard and respect for me, and I am very much more offended by it than you could be."

M. Dietrich, astonished at the harshness of my language, looked at me intently. He approached me, and, kissing my hand, said, "I can guess what is the matter. Cesarine has seen him, then?"

"She spoke with him yesterday for the first time."

"Then she cannot love him! And he?" —

"He detests me," answered Cesarine.

"Ah, very good!" said M. Dietrich, smiling. "That's the trouble, eh? Well, well, my poor child, try to make him love you; but I warn you of one thing, that you must marry him, for I will not let you impose upon any one else the illusory position which you gave to M. de Rivonnière. I observed at the ball how ridiculous was the situation in which he was placed. Every one was pointing at him, every one calls him a fool: you pass for a mocking creature, and from that to being regarded as a coquette is but a step."

"Well, papa, I will not pass for a coquette, because I will marry the man whom I have chosen."

"Do you consent, Mlle. de Nermont?" asked M. Dietrich.

"No," I replied. "I forbid it formally; and, if it has come to that, in the name of my nephew, I refuse."

"You cannot refuse in his name, because he knows nothing about the matter at all," cried Cesarine; "and you have no right to dispose of his future without consulting him."

"I will not consult him, because he

ought not to know that you are mad."

"You would rather he should think me a coquette? He might love me, but you would prefer that he should hate me? It is you, Pauline, who have become mad. Listen, papa. Yesterday I was guilty of a bad action: it was the first of my life, and may it be the last! I wished to punish M. Paul for his haughtiness towards us, towards myself particularly. I made advances to him with the intention of plunging him in despair when I had brought him to my feet. It was very wrong, I know; and I am punished for it. I am consumed in the fire which I kindled. I have felt love gnawing at my heart; and, if I do not marry this man, I will never marry: I will become an old maid."

"You may remain unmarried, or you may marry. You may do whatever you will, except compromise yourself. Come, Mlle. de Nermont, why should you oppose this marriage if Cesarine's intention is really serious? That may be the case; and, so far as I am concerned, she could not have made a better choice. M. Gilbert is young; but, I retract my words, he is not a boy. His proud bearing before us, his letters which you have showed me, his courage for work, the kind of stoicism which marks him, and indeed the very serious anxiety, inspired from above I have no doubt, which I had yesterday about him, are considerations, without speaking of his family, which is respectable and distinguished, without speaking of another thing, which has very great weight with me nevertheless, his relationship to you, the advice and example which he has received from you. To refuse so energetically as you have just done, you must have some other reason. Perhaps you would not like to

tell me what it is before my daughter : you shall tell me " —

"At once !" cried Cesarine, leaving the room impetuously.

"Yes, at once," repeated M. Dietrich, closing the door behind her. "In dealing with Cesarine we must hide no sparks under the cinders. Are you afraid of being accused of ambition and shrewdness ?"

"Yes, sir : that is the first thing."

"You are above " —

"No one is above any thing. Who knows me well enough to exonerate me from all premeditation and intrigue ? Very few people. I am in too subordinate a position to have many true friends. The favor to my nephew would cause a great deal of jealousy. Neither of us would receive without mortification the malevolent comments of your acquaintances, — that is, all Paris and all France. No, no ! our reputation is too precious to be compromised thus."

"If our connection is so extensive, it will be easy for us to let the real truth be known ; and indeed it is known already. Not one of the many people whom you have met here will have the slightest doubt that your action has been honorable in the matter. As for Paul, he will arouse jealousy of course ; but who would not by marrying Cesarine ? If any one should be driven off by such a fear as that, he would be depriving himself of all power, of all success, of all happiness. Your obstacle is chimerical, and one that should be trampled under foot. Tell me the other causes of your objection."

"There is but one other ; but you must acknowledge its weight. Your daughter and my nephew are totally incompatible in character. Cesarine has but one passion, — to make every

body yield to her ; Paul but one, — to yield to no one."

"That is indeed serious ; but who can say that the contrast will not bring happiness to both ? Cesarine, conquered by love, forced to respect her husband, and accepting him as her equal, will come back to real life, and will alarm us no more by the excess of her independence. Paul, softened by happiness, will learn to yield to tenderness, and to believe in it."

"And suppose this result can never be brought about, but only contests, estrangements, and perhaps separation ! No, M. Dietrich : let us not try to bring these two extremes together. Be alarmed for your child, as I am alarmed for mine. Heroic remedies may be good in desperate cases, but this is nothing more than a passing fancy. One hour ago, if I had asked Cesarine to marry Paul, she would have died of laughing. It was only in the face of my reproaches that she, feeling guilty of a grave fault, imagined this passion to justify herself. One hour hence go to her, and tell her that you will consent no more than I to this marriage, and you will relieve her of a great perplexity, I engage."

"Very likely. I will soon see. But let us leave her time to take alarm at her own flightiness. I am altogether of your opinion, except upon the point of your false pride. If there were no other obstacle, I would set at work to overcome it. I am a man of principle, and believe it proper and praiseworthy to ally poverty to riches when that poverty is worthy of esteem and respect. I consider M. Paul Gilbert's poverty a virtue of the highest order. I assure you, that, in inviting him to my house, I thought that possibly he might please my daughter ; and

I am not in the least alarmed about either of them."

When M. Dietrich left me, I felt completely upset and besieged with doubts and scruples. Had I really the right to close to Paul a future so brilliant, a fortune so un hoped-for? This child, whose stoicism had given me so much anxiety, I could make a free man, influential, happy perhaps; for who could say that Mlle. Dietrich would not be cured of her pride by the miracle of love? I was all of a tremble, like one who should see a paradise beyond a yawning chasm, but lacked for the moment the courage to leap across.

X.

I DID not see Cesarine again until dinner-time. She was as calm and as amiable as if nothing serious had passed between us. M. Dietrich took dinner that day at some embassy or other. Cesarine teased her Aunt Helmina at dessert about the greenness of her dress and the redness of her hair; but when we passed into the drawing-room she ceased laughing all at once, and led me aside. "It appears," she said, "that neither my father nor you are willing to pay the least respect to my desire in this matter, and that I am no longer to be permitted to make my own choice. Papa has been very obliging, but, after all, very firm. That indicates that he will yield completely whenever he sees that I am firm also. He was not able to conceal from me that all he wished was that I should take time for reflection. As for you, my dear, it will be for him to induce you to revoke your sentence. I shall charge him with that duty."

"And, in these nice arrangements,

what disposition do you make of my nephew's will?"

"Oh! as to your nephew, it will be for me to inspire him with confidence. It is an interesting task, which I reserve to myself. But he is away now; and this respite gives me time to convince father and you of the serious character of my resolution."

"How do you know that my nephew is absent?"

"Oh! I have my private sources of information. He went to Leipsic this morning. I am going to turn this absence to profit by putting an end at once and forever to the hopes of M. de Rivonnière."

"Then you have written to him again?"

"No: I sent word by Dubois, his old valet, who brought me a bouquet from the marquis, to come and take a cup of tea with us this evening, very early; because I am still weary after the ball, and wish to retire early. He will be here soon. Hark! he is just ringing the bell."

"It was to be alone with him, then, that you wished to dine with your aunt and myself only to-day?"

"Exactly. Don't you hear his carriage? See if it is he! I don't wish to receive anybody else."

"Must I leave you alone together?"

"No, indeed. I have never admitted him to a *tête-à-tête* that I know of. My aunt will not be present. I have asked her not. But I wish you would remain."

"I am very much inclined to let you carry out alone to the end your imprudent and capricious schemes."

"Then you would compromise me!"

The marquis was announced. I took my work and remained.

"I wanted to speak to you," said Cesarine to him. "Last evening, at

the ball, you cut a sorry figure. Did you know it?"

"I know it; and since I do not make any complaint" —

"I ought not to complain of you? But I do complain of the part of cruel sovereign which you compel me to play. Some remedy must be applied to this state of things, which troubles my father, and disgusts me also."

"The remedy is very simple."

"Yes: I suppose you mean by accepting you as a husband. But as that cannot be, what then?"

"You love me no more, then, than on the first day of our acquaintance?"

"Indeed, I love you with a good and loyal friendship; but I will not be your wife. You know that. I have told you so a hundred times."

"You have, nevertheless, always added a word which you omit to-day. You have always said, 'I will not yet marry.'"

"Then, in your opinion, I have given you hope?"

"Very little, I confess; but you have never forbidden me to hope."

"To day I forbid you."

"It is a little late."

"How so? What sacrifices have you made for me?"

"That of my self-respect. I have consented to parade before the eyes of every one my devotion to you, and to act as a man who expects no reward. Friendship for you has made me find this rôle a very pleasant one; and now you tell me it makes me ridiculous. It is your right to do so; but what remedy do you offer me?"

"You must be in love with me no longer, and you must tell the world that you have never been enamoured of me. I will help you in causing people to believe it. I will say, that

from the very first we agreed not to spoil friendship by love; that it is I who have retained you as an intimate friend. If any one rallies you on our relations in my presence, I will reply with so much energy, that my words shall carry authority."

"I know that you are capable of what is impossible; but I do not fear bantering at all. There is no one more sensitive than a vain man. I have no vanity. Whenever the benevolent pity of which I am the object becomes disagreeable and offensive, I shall know how to put an end to the bad jokes. Don't try to throw a veil over my defeat. I accept it as a brave man, who has done nothing to be ashamed of, and who will not lie."

"Then, my friend, you must cease your visits here; for I will not bear the reputation of being a flirting coquette."

"You can never avoid it. Every woman who draws men about her without favoring any one is condemned to that reputation. What does it matter to you? Bear it bravely, as I take my burden of passing for one of your victims."

"You take the better rôle my very dear friend; but I refuse the other, the bad."

"In what respect is it bad? A woman of your beauty and accomplishments has a perfect right to be difficult, and to accept homage from many."

"You want me to appear to be a heartless woman?"

"You will be adored and praised so much the more: it is the law of society and of its opinion. Take the attitude which is suited to one who wishes to preserve her independence, at whatever price, without condemning herself to solitude."

"You are giving me bad advice. I see that you want me to be egotistical. My society is agreeable to you, my prattle amuses you. You have no reason to be jealous, being the best treated of all my suitors. You wish the relation to continue; and you lay plans to drive away from me all these people who demand that a woman shall be, above all, sincere and good."

"I begin to see your idea more clearly. You wish to marry!"

"Who will prevent me?"

"Not I. I have no rights in the matter."

"You acknowledge that?"

"I am a man of honor."

"Well, give me your hand: you are an excellent friend."

The Marquis de Rivonnière kissed the hand of Cesarine with a respect the calm abnegation of which astonished me. I did not suppose that he was so submissive, and still bending over my embroidery I watched him attentively.

"Then," he resumed, after a moment of silence, "you are going to make a choice."

"Have I said so?"

"It seems to me so. Why should you not tell me, since I am and remain your friend?"

"Indeed! If that were so, why should I not tell you?"

"Say it, and fear nothing. Do I look like a man who is likely to blow out his brains?"

"No, indeed. You would show by such an act that you had none."

"True; and I have brains. But one may be philosophical in such matters, or not. Come, tell me whom you have chosen."

I believed it to be my duty to prevent Cesarine from committing a serious indiscretion; and, addressing the

marquis, I said, "She cannot tell you, for the simple reason that she herself does not know whom she has chosen."

"That is true," replied Cesarine, whom my troubled look warned of danger: "I do not yet know him."

M. de Rivonnière seemed relieved. He recognized one of the whims of Cesarine, and no longer took the matter seriously. He even laughed at her indecision, and refused to see in it any thing cruel towards himself; for of all those who were spoiling this very much spoiled child, he was the most indulgent and the most delighted to spare her every disappointment.

"But we have not yet concluded the treaty," she said. "It is now necessary that you should cease your visits or cease to love me."

"Permit me to see you, and do not be disturbed by my hopeless passion for you. I will overcome it, or will at least render it not an obstacle for you."

Cesarine began to find the marquis too willing. If he had premeditated his rôle, he could not have played it better. I saw that she was surprised and piqued. She had prepared herself for an angry scene, or for the mortification of the marquis: she found him a true man of the world, in the chivalrous and delicate sense of the term. It seemed to him that he had obtained the victory by her very tactics of yielding. "Go away now," said I to her aside: "I will undertake to find out what he thinks."

She retired at once, saying that she was tired, and taking the hand of her slave coldly enough. "I beg permission to remain a moment longer," said M. de Rivonnière as soon as we were alone. "You must tell me the name of the happy mortal."

"There is no happy mortal," I replied. "M. Dietrich has simply re-

proached his daughter for the situation in which her caprice has placed you. She said she would marry to put an end to it."

"Whom? Me?"

"No: the Emperor of China, — or what she really did say was not more serious than that."

"You wish to deceive me, Mlle. de Nermont, or else you really do not know the truth. Mlle. Dietrich is certainly in love with some one."

"Whom do you suspect, then?"

"I do not know; but I will know. She disappeared from the ball-room soon after sending a note by Bertrand, her confidential servant. I followed her, sought her, lost sight of her. I found her again coming out of a mysterious passage. She took me nervously by the arm, and ordered me to take her in to dance. I could not see the person whom she left behind, or whom she had just dismissed; but she had to laugh, and to rally me on my uneasiness, because she was so uneasy herself."

"Have you any particular person in view in your suspicions?"

"I suspect every one. There is not a man among all her acquaintance who may not be smitten with her."

"You seemed determined not to be jealous of whoever might be preferred to you."

"Jealous? I? I will not be so long; for the person whom she would marry" —

"Well, what?"

"Well, what! I shall kill him, of course."

"What do you say?"

"I say what I mean, and what I will do."

"You speak seriously?"

"You will see," he replied, wiping away with his handkerchief the per-

spiration that stood on his face. His fine, delicate face had not a wrinkle or a frown; but his lips were pale and firmly set.

I was frightened. "What!" said I: "you are so vindictive as that? — you, whom I believed so generous?"

"I am generous coolly and on reflection; but when angry, — I have told you so already, — I am not myself."

"You must reflect, then."

"No: not before I have revenged myself; it is impossible."

"Does your anger last several days?"

"Weeks; months, perhaps."

"Then it is hate which you cherish, without making an effort against it. And you were just now boasting of being a philosopher."

"Just now I lied, you lied, Mlle. Dietrich lied too. We were playing at diplomacy, after the manner of society. Now here we are in an atmosphere of truth. She is in love with another man than myself, and cares for me not the least in the world. You prudently conceal his name from me, but you understand very well my anger; and, for my part, I feel the blood rushing to my brain in great angry waves. Whatever of savageness there is in man or in an animal reduces to nothing the fine maxims and the beautiful sentiments of civilized life. That is my case. Any thing you can say in the language of civilization is wholly unsuited to me; and I do not understand it. It is useless. For three years now I have loved Mlle. Dietrich. I have tried to forget her, to love some one else. The other I have sacrificed to her, and have thus been guilty of a very bad action; for I have seduced a pure and loving girl more beautiful than Cesarine, and better. I do not regret her, because

I was not able to attach myself to her; but I regret my conduct, and so much the more because it was not permitted me to make reparation. A little fortune in bank-notes, which I sent to my victim, was returned to me immediately and with indignation. She returned to her parents: and, when I sought her there, she had disappeared; and in two years I have been unable to find a trace of her. I sought for her even at the Morgue, bathed in a cold sweat, as if already suffering the expiation of my crime; for indeed I feel it to be such, and suffer remorse on account of it. Attached to the steps of Cesarine, and following that chimera, I became oblivious to the past. I am rejected: I am punished, covered with shame, furious against myself. I see once more the spectre of my victim. It grins a horrid grin from the water, at the bottom of which, perhaps, the poor corpse is lying. Poor girl! you are avenged indeed; but I will avenge you still more. Cesarine shall be the wife of no one. Her dream of happiness shall vanish in smoke. I will kill whoever comes near her!"

"You wish to hazard your life for a disappointment in love?"

"I will not hazard my life. I will kill him: I will assassinate him, if necessary, sooner than let my prey escape."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards — I shall not wait for them to drag me before the courts. I will execute justice upon myself."

Saying this, the marquis, pale, and his eyes filled with a dark fire, took his hat. I tried in vain to detain him. "Where are you going?" I asked. "You cannot cast blame upon any one in particular."

"I am going," he replied, "to con-

stitute myself the spy and the jailer of Cesarine. She shall do nothing, she shall not write a word, but I will know it."

He went away, pushing me aside almost rudely.

I ran to Cesarine, who had already gone to bed and was half asleep. She had fallen into the prompt and calm sleep of persons whose conscience is perfectly pure or perfectly silent. I told her what had just happened. She heard me with a smile. "Well," she said, "I shall have to restore my esteem to my poor Rivonnière. I did not suppose him capable of such hot love. His fury pleases me much better than his flat submission. I begin to believe that he really deserves my friendship."

"And perhaps your love?"

"Who knows?" said she, yawning. "Perhaps! Come, I will try to forget your nephew. Write something quickly, so that the marquis may not kill himself to-night. Tell him that I have decided on nothing at all."

I was so frightened for my Paul, that I wrote to M. de Rivonnière, and swore to him that Cesarine loved no one. As soon as M. Dietrich came home, I begged him to think no longer of my nephew as a possible son-in-law.

M. de Rivonnière did not re-appear for a week. He confessed to me that he had not believed what I had written; that he had watched Cesarine most minutely; and that, having discovered nothing, he had come to observe her nearer.

Cesarine gave him a kind reception; and, without making any assertions or entering into any direct explanation, she allowed him to believe that she had been submitting him to the proof; but very soon she found herself surrounded

with a network of distrust and jealousy. The marquis observed all that she said, and weighed it in his own mind; watched all her motions, and tried to read her intentions in every act. That ardent passion of which she had believed him incapable, which she had perhaps designed to inspire, quickly became embarrassing, offensive to her. She complained of it bitterly, and declared that she would never marry a tyrant. M. de Rivonnière saw that he was referred to, and came no more either to the Dietrich mansion or to any other house where he might possibly meet Cesarine.

Cesarine became tired of this state of things. "It is astonishing," said she to me one day, "how one gets used to people. I supposed that that good Rivonnière might perhaps form a part of my house, of my furniture, of my toilet; that I could be absurd, good, foolish, wicked, sad, under his eyes, without his being any more moved than the mirrors in my chamber. He had a look of petrified adoration which was very agreeable to me, and which I could find nowhere else. What led him to change into an Othello the other evening? I liked him a little as a servant-cavalier; but I don't like him at all as the hero of a melodrama."

"Forget him," said I. "As you will not make him happy, do not make him miserable. Wait, as unmarried life does not displease you, and as you can choose from the numerous aspirants the one who can inspire you with a lasting love."

"Whom do you wish me to choose, when this captain is going to kill the object of my choice, or be killed by him? Don't you see that the choice must absolutely lead to the death of a man? Is that a very re-assuring prospect?"

"We will hope that this fury of the marquis will pass away, if it has not done so already. It was too violent to last."

"Who knows whether this perfect man of the world is not merely a terrible savage. And when you reflect that he is perhaps not the only one who conceals brutal passions under the garb of an angel, I don't know whom to trust any more. I thought myself able to read character. I am, it may be, the dupe of all the fine speeches that have been made to me, and of all the fine manners that have been exhibited before me."

"If you want me to tell you," said I, determined to parley with her no longer, "I don't think you a judge of character at all."

"Really! Why not?"

"Because you are too much occupied with yourself to examine others. You have great skill in stealing the weapons of the weak from their armories; but you will not believe that there are strong people, or that they have any weapons. You notice a defect, a cleft, and you slip in the point of your dagger; but it remains there, and you get wounded in the hand. That's what has happened with M. de Rivonnière."

"And what will happen with others, perhaps. It may be that you are right, and that I am too personal to be strong. I will try to modify myself."

"Why always seek strength when gentleness will answer better?"

"Am I not gentle? I thought I had all the suavity in the world."

"You have all the appearance and all the charms of gentleness; but you use it just as you use your beauty, your intelligence, and all your natural gifts. At bottom your heart is cold, and your character hard."

"How you talk this morning! Must

I get accustomed to your scolding? Well, tell me, you ugly thing, do you suppose that I could become tender if I wished?"

"No: it is too late."

"You do not admit, then, that a new, unknown sentiment, love for example, can awaken the dormant instincts of my heart?"

"No: they would have awakened before now. You have not a maternal soul. You never loved either your birds or your dolls."

"I am not womanly enough, you think?"

"No, nor manly enough, either."

"Well," said she, rising rather angrily, "I will try to be manly enough hereafter. I am going to lead the life of a boy. I will hunt, groom the horses, interest myself in stables and in politics, treat men as companions, and women as children. I will not attempt to reveal the glory of my sex. I will scoff at every thing, cause people to talk about me, and will nevertheless be interested in nothing and nobody. Such are the men of my times. I wonder if their stupidity makes them happy!"

She rung the bell, called for her horse, and, in spite of my remonstrances, went to parade herself in the Bois in the eyes of all Paris, escorted only by her two devoted servants, the famous Bertrand, and a groom. It was the first time that she had ever gone out thus without her father or myself. It is true, that, as I did not ride, I could accompany her only in a carriage, and as M. Dietrich, had very little time to devote to her as a cavalier, she was virtually almost excluded from indulgence in this her favorite amusement. She had declared to us before, that, as soon as she attained her majority, she intended to make as free

use of her liberty as a young English or American girl would do. But we had hoped that she would not display her eccentricity too quickly. She wished to launch herself on the world however, and had done so; and now she had gone out in her carriage, and was going to drive about unaccompanied. This caprice did not injure her nevertheless, although it made her talked about. She acted with so much pride and resoluteness, that she triumphed over the doubts and the fears of the severest critics. I was in dread lest she should take a fancy to walk alone through the streets. She restrained herself from that, and indeed, protected by her connections, by her fine bearing, by her general appearance and good taste, and by the notoriety which she had already established, she was running risks, only if people suspected her of running them, which was impossible.

This precocious liberty, to which her father dared offer no opposition in the frame of mind in which he found her, intoxicated Cesarine at first like new wine, and made her forget her fancy for my nephew. She put away from herself at the same time all thoughts of marriage.

XI.

PAUL returned from Germany, and my perplexity revived with his arrival. I did not want him ever to see Cesarine again; but how was I to tell him not to come any more to our house, without confessing to him that I feared an assault more serious than the first upon his peace? Cesarine seemed cured of her folly; but how far might one trust one's self with her? And if, unknown to us, she set a snare to capture and marry him, would he not be

dazzled so much, were it only for a few days, as to fall into the trap, only to suffer all his days from a deception so terrible?

I determined to tell him all the truth; and I anticipated his visit by going to see him at his office. He had a little private room at the store. I went there at seven o'clock in the morning, well knowing, that, instead of resting after his journey, he would go to his work. When I had confessed my fears to him, without making any allusion to the threats of M. de Rivonnière, whom he might, perhaps, wish to defy, he re-assured me by an outburst of laughter. "I have not the least inclination towards marriage," he said; "and all the fascinations of Mlle. Dietrich would be entirely ineffectual to lead me that way. I marry a frivolous woman! Give my time, my life, my future, my heart, my honor, into the keeping of a headstrong and ungovernable girl, who stakes her own existence on the turn of a copper! Don't be afraid, aunt: your marvellous pupil is disagreeable to me. I have told you so before; and I repeat it. Shall I do violence to my own inclination in order to share her fortune? My whole life gives the lie to such a suspicion."

"Yes, my boy: yes, indeed. It isn't your ambition which I fear, but some kind of dizziness of imagination or sense."

"Rest easy, my aunt. I have a mistress as young as Mlle. Dietrich, and more beautiful."

"What! You have a mistress!"

"Well, what of it? Are you surprised?"

"You never told me before."

"You never asked me."

"I should not have dared. It

would almost be immodest for mother and son to talk on that subject."

"Then I had better have said nothing about it now. We will talk no more of it."

"Indeed, I am, on the whole, relieved to hear of it. Cesarine's great liking for you has arisen because she believes you to be as pure as an angel."

"Let her know that I am not pure at all."

"But how do you find time to be with a mistress?"

"It is because I give her all the time which I have at my disposal that I do not go into company, and lose not a minute that I do not devote to my work or to her."

"Indeed! Are you happy?"

"Very happy, aunt."

"Does she love you well?"

"No, not well, but very much."

"That is to say that she does not make you happy?"

"Do you wish to know all?"

"Of course, since I know a little."

"Well, listen then. Two years ago, — two years and some months, — I was going from my employer's store to the house of another publisher, who lives, in summer, in the country on the banks of the Seine. After leaving the railroad-station, there is some distance to be made on foot along the river, under the willows. Approaching a clump of trees unusually dense, which juts into the river, I saw in the water a drowning woman. I rescued her, and carried her into a mean hut which was nearest at hand. I was received by a peasant woman, who uttered loud cries when she recognized her daughter. 'Ah, the unhappy child!' she screamed: 'she tried to kill herself! I was sure that would be the end of it all.'

"'But,' said I, 'she is not dead. Look out for her! Rub her as quick as you can, and hard. I will go and fetch a doctor. Where is there one near here?'

"'There,' said she, pointing to a white house opposite hers, but on the other side of the river. 'Get into the first boat you can find.'

"I ran towards the boats. There was no person anywhere to be seen. The boats were chained and padlocked. I was already wet from my plunge after the girl. I cast off my coat, which might be in my way, and swam the river, which is not broad. I went to the doctor's house: he was absent. I inquired for another. They directed me to the next village; and I again cast myself into the river. I returned to the house of the washerwoman, — for the mother of her whom I had saved was a laundress. I wished to know if there was still time to call a physician. I found the doctor already there: he had been passing, and was called in. 'The poor girl has got off with a cold bath,' said he. 'She has already recovered. You were just in time. You are very wet, and will get cold. Come with me after I have looked once more at the patient.' He made me get into his carriage in spite of myself; and then across the bridge we went to his house, where he insisted on my changing my clothes. In five minutes we were there. The doctor's wife having been told the state of the case by her husband in two words, made me go into the kitchen, where there was a roaring fire, brought me a dressing-gown, trousers, slippers, and a bowl of hot wine. I never was so coddled in my life before.

"I was hardly dressed in these borrowed garments, when the doctor came and told me that the drowned girl was

getting along nicely, and declared that I should not go away until I had dined, and my own clothes were dried. But all these details are needless. I was in the hands of excellent people, who told me much about Marguerite, — that's the name of the young thing who tried to drown herself.

"She was sixteen. She was born in the hut to which I had just carried her, where she had shared hard work with her mother, while learning from a neighbor a trade much more easy and better suited to her delicate constitution. She had become a very nice worker in lace. She was a good and gentle girl, industrious, and not a flirt; but she had the misfortune to be very beautiful, and to attract much attention. Her mother sent her out to work at the shops in the village and the neighborhood. She had met, the year before, a handsome student, who was strolling about the country, and who watched her secretly several days. Then he spoke to her, coaxed her, and she followed him. 'You must know,' the doctor said, 'that she was very badly treated by her mother, who is a very bad woman, and would have liked nothing better than to speculate upon her daughter's virtue, but made a great outcry when her daughter disappeared without giving her any chance to get profit out of the elopement.'

"'At the end of about two months, the student, who had carried Marguerite to Paris or to the suburbs, — no one knows where, — went away to the country to marry, abandoning the poor girl, after having offered her money, which she refused. She returned to her mother, who would have pardoned her if she had brought any money, and who loaded her with blows when she heard that Marguerite had accepted nothing.

“ ‘ Since this sad adventure, ’ — remember that it is the doctor who says all this, — ‘ Marguerite has conducted herself prudently and virtuously, working nobly, submitting to all reproaches and sneers with perfect sweetness. My wife has really taken her into friendship, and has given her work. I have taken care of her ; for her disappointment made her sick. Fortunately for her she was not *enceinte*, — unfortunately too, perhaps ; for it would have attached her to life to have a child to raise. For some weeks she has been in greater distress than ever. Her mother has tried to get her to sell herself to an old libertine, whom I know very well, but whom I will not name. He is my richest patient, and passes for a great philanthropist. The persecution had become so irritating, that Marguerite lost control of herself, and tried to kill herself to-day, to escape the bitter lot which pursued her. I don’t know whether you have rendered her a service in saving her, but you have done your duty ; and truly you have rescued a good girl, who would have been honest if she had had a good mother.’

“ ‘ Will you not offer your house to her ? or will you not at least find some place for her ? ’

“ ‘ I have done the best I could, but her mother would not allow any one to tear her prey away from her. Besides, my position in the community does not permit me to engage in kidnapping a minor.’

“ ‘ Then what will become of the unhappy girl ? ’

“ ‘ She will be ruined, or she will commit suicide.’

“ ‘ Such was the conclusion to which the doctor had come. He was kind-hearted ; but he had seen so much evil and misery, that he could resign him-

self to see people wronged, suffering, and dying.

“ ‘ The next day I went to see Marguerite with my plans all formed. I found her alone, still pale and weak. Her mother was away making the rounds of her customers. The poor girl wept when she saw me. I wanted to make her promise, as my reward, that she would renounce all suicidal plans. She bowed her head, sobbing, and said not a word.

“ ‘ I know your story,’ said I to her. ‘ I am aware of your intolerable position here. I pity you, I honor you, and I wish to save you. But I am not rich, and can offer you but a very humble condition. I am acquainted with an honest working-woman, pleasant and kind, and not very young. I will place you in her house, and for a very moderate sum, which I will furnish, she will lodge and feed you until you shall be able to earn your living by work. Will you accept ? ’

“ ‘ She refused. I supposed that she was determined at last to yield to the infamous requirements of her mother ; but I was mistaken. She supposed that I wished to make her my mistress. ‘ If I went with you,’ said she, ‘ you would not marry me ? ’

“ ‘ No, certainly not,’ I replied. ‘ I don’t intend to marry.’

“ ‘ Never ? ’

“ ‘ Not under ten or twelve years. I shall not have the means to support a family.’

“ ‘ But if you should find a rich wife ? ’

“ ‘ I shall not find her.’

“ ‘ How do you know that ? ’

“ ‘ If I should find her, she would have to wait until I was rich also. I will owe nothing to any one.’

“ ‘ And what should I do for you, if you took me away from here ? ’

“‘Nothing.’

“‘Really, nothing? You would not even require gratitude?’

“‘Not the least. I am not in love with you, beautiful as you are. I have no time for a passion; and, to tell you the whole truth, I feel myself capable of a passion only for a woman whose first love I shall be. To take advantage of your beauty for my own pleasure, especially in the condition in which I find you, would seem to me a crime, and an abuse of confidence. I offer you an honest, but a laborious and a very precarious life. Your mother proffers riches, laziness, and shame. Think the matter over. Here is my address. Let no one see it; for, if you escape from the authority of your mother, you must conceal your hiding-place. If you have confidence in me, come and find me.’

“‘But why, in Heaven’s name,’ she cried, all in a tremble from emotion, ‘are you so good to me?’

“‘Because I have prevented you from killing yourself, and I owe it to you to render life possible for you.’

“I left her. The next day she came to my room. I conducted her to the house of the working-woman where she was to have an asylum, and did not see her again for a week.

“When I had time to go and see her I found her at work. Her hostess praised her very much. Marguerite said that she was happy; and several months passed only to convince me of her good intentions and her good conduct. She worked rapidly and well; went out only with her new friend, and showed a kindness and love for her which were very touching. I was contented with having succeeded in doing her a little benefit, which is more difficult than is generally supposed.”

“Then,” said I, “you have now become enamoured of her?”

“No,” replied Paul. “She began to love me, to exaggerate my kindness, to take me for a god, to weep and pine away at my indifference. When I would question her, I saw that she despaired of pleasing me.

“‘You do please me,’ said I; ‘but that is not the question. If you had been a wanton, I might have made love to you desperately. But you deserve better than to be my mistress; and you cannot be my wife, as you well know.’

“‘I do know it too well,’ she answered. ‘You are a proud and unstained man. You could not marry a ruined girl. But, if I were your mistress, would you despise me?’

“‘No, of course not. So far as I know you, I should have for you the most sincere regard and the most stable friendship.’

“‘And that would last?’—

“‘As long as possible, perhaps always.’

“‘You will promise nothing absolutely?’

“‘Nothing absolutely; and I may add that your lot will not be more desirable than it is now. I have no home. I live in poverty. I should not see you all the day. I would agree that you should not lack for the necessities of life; but I could procure you neither luxuries, nor idleness, nor fine dresses.’

“‘I accept that position, then,’ said she: ‘as I can work, I will not be any expense to you. Your friendship is all I ask. I know very well that I deserve no more; but so that I see you every day I shall be happy.’

“That is the way I formed my connection with Marguerite, — a tie slender in appearance, but strong in reality, for — but I have told you enough for one day, my dear aunt! I hear

the bell, which means that I am needed on business. If you wish to know all, come to-morrow to my house."

"To your house? Then you now have a house?"

"Yes: I have rented a little suite in the Rue d'Assas, where Marguerite and Madame Feron, the working-woman who at first received her, and is attached to her, work together. I go there in the evening only; but to-morrow we have a holiday afternoon, and, if you wish to come there at one o'clock, you will find me at home."

XII.

THE next day, at the appointed hour, I was at the number of the Rue d'Assas which he had written on his card. I asked for Madame Feron, and was directed to the third story. Paul met me on the landing, holding in his arms a big boy about a year old, fresh as a rose, handsome as his mother, who stood pale and fearful in the doorway. Paul put his boy in my arms, saying, "Kiss him and bless him, aunt: now you know the whole story."

I was affected and displeased. The rude revelation of a secret so well kept rendered more difficult the future which I had prepared in my own mind for my nephew, and which had never included as among the possibilities a mistress and an illegitimate son.

The child was so handsome, and the kiss of infancy is so powerful, that I took the little Pierre upon my knee as soon as I entered the room, and pressed him to my heart without being able to speak a word. Marguerite sobbed at my feet. "Kiss her too," said Paul. "If she did not deserve it, I would not have asked you here."

I kissed Marguerite, and examined

her. Paul had told me the truth: she was more beautiful in the modest dress of a *grisette* than Cesarine in all the blaze of diamonds. The misfortunes of her life had given to her features, and to her perfect form, an expression and a *pose* which interested one in her at once; and every moment increased the interest. I was surprised that she had not inspired Paul with a sentiment more quick than friendship: little by little I thought I discovered the cause. Marguerite was a true plebeian, with the qualities and the faults which indicate a rustic education. She passed from extreme timidity to a too expansive confidence. She was not one of those exceptional natures which contact with a superior mind transforms rapidly: she spoke as she had always spoken; she had not even the intelligent suavity of the Parisian working-woman. She was contemplative rather than reflective; and if there were moments when emotion drove her to striking and powerful expressions, for the greater part of the time her language was vulgar, and such as is commonly employed to express erroneous or frivolous ideas.

Madame Feron was introduced to me, the widow of a sub-officer killed in the Crimea, in the possession of a little pension, which, joined to her earnings as a clear-starcher, gave her a modest support. She helped Marguerite in her family cares, and took the child occasionally to the Luxembourg, accepting for her loss of time only her free rent. I was taken through the suite of apartments, very small indeed, but light and airy, and fitted up with the nicest propriety. The two women had separate apartments; a larger room than either was used for a sitting and reception room; the dining-room and kitchen were microscopic. I

noticed also a library of considerable size, to which Paul had brought a few books, a bureau, a sofa-bed, and some little statuettes. "You work here, then," said I.

"Sometimes, when Monsieur, my son, is cutting his teeth, and prevents me from sleeping. But it was not to give myself the luxury of a library that I fitted up this room."

"Why, then?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"Why, it was for you, my little aunt. It is our prettiest chamber, and the best furnished. It is out of the way; and you might sleep or work here without hearing the squalling of Monsieur Pierre."

"You desire, then, that I should come and live with you?"

"No: you are better off at the Dietrichs. But you are not at home there; and I have always told you that a caprice of the lovely Cesarine might make you sensible of the fact. I wanted to have a home to offer you at any time, were it only for a few days. I do not want it to be said that my aunt could leave the house where she dwells, in a carriage, without knowing where she could go, or where she could leave her trunks, and be doomed to the solitude of a room at a hotel. This is your domain, aunty; and here are your friends, — two devoted women, and a valet, who, under the pretext of being your nephew, will serve you with all his might."

I embraced my dear child with deep feeling. The whole family accompanied me to the door; and I did not go away without promising to come again soon. It was agreed that I should see Paul only at his house, and upon the days when he was at liberty. If, on one hand, I had been alarmed at seeing

him at twenty-four bound in a *liaison* which his position as a father would render it difficult to break off, on the other hand, I saw an end of both the caprices of Cesarine, and the vengeance of the marquis; and I was relieved of the more immediate and pressing anxiety.

Cesarine immediately perceived my serenity, as she had before observed my anxiety. "What now?" she asked as soon as I returned. "You have been gone a long time, and you have been weeping."

I denied it. "You are deceiving me," said she. "Your nephew may have returned sick perhaps? But he is out of danger, I see that in your eyes."

"If my nephew had been ever so little ill, though out of all danger, I should not have returned at all. Your romance is improbable."

"I will form another, ten more, if necessary; but I will find out the truth. There has been a drama in your life, as they say, this morning."

"Well, perhaps!" I replied, determined to put an end to her fancy for Paul once for all. "My nephew has given me a great surprise to-day. He has revealed to me that he is married."

"Oh, what a good joke!" cried Cesarine, bursting into laughter, but at the same time turning very pale. "You have only invented this story to turn me from him. Could he marry without your consent?"

"Certainly. He is of age, and not under my guardianship."

"And he had never before let you into the secret, this model nephew of yours!"

"In a love-match, one consults nobody, if there is reason to fear the displeasure of friends. Fortunately he has made a good choice. I have seen his wife to-day."

"Is she pretty?"

"She is not only pretty, but handsome."

"More handsome than myself, I suppose?"

"Unquestionably."

"What stories you are telling!"

"I have kissed their son, a very lovely child."

"Their son! The son of your nephew! Is your nephew old enough to have a son? You mean a *brat*, of course!"

"Well, say a brat. He is a year old."

"Pauline, swear that you are not mocking me!"

"Well, I swear it."

"Then it is all over with me," said she. "There is my last illusion vanished like the others." And turning away, the strange girl buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

I looked at her in astonishment, asking myself if it were not a dramatic trick to soften me, and make me retract a lie. Seeing that I would not speak, she arose impetuously and left the room. I followed her to her room, where M. Dietrich, wondering why she did not come down to dinner, soon joined us. Cesarine would not be questioned. She was really in earnest, and wept true tears.

"Father," said she, "console me if you can, for Pauline is very indifferent to my grief. Her nephew is married! a good while ago, too, for he is a father! I have been indulging in a very absurd romance; but do not laugh at me, it is a very sad one too. That astonishes you; but why? Have I not told you that he was the only man whom I could love? He had united in himself intelligence, firmness, dignity of character, and purity of morals, which I had sought for in vain among

men of the world, beginning with the marquis. I did not think — stupid girl that I was! — that a young man can remain pure only by marrying very young, and by marrying for love. Now I may search in vain all my life for a man who has not the stain of immorality upon him. I shall never find such a one, unless it may be some idiotic infant, whose companion I should blush to be; for now I know life and the world. There is no mean between silliness and wickedness. Father, take me away; let us go far, very far from here, — to America, to the savages."

"Is that the best thing to do?" laughed M. Dietrich. "Do you propose that we shall begin a search for the 'last of the Mohicans'?"

He would not take her despair as a serious matter. She forced him to believe in it by a fit of hysterics, which she feigned at first, and which afterwards became real, — a trick possible to all wilful women and spoiled children. They fidget, cry out, manifest their emotions in convulsions, which are not exactly pretended, but which might be stifled and held back if they were absolutely real; soon the veritable convulsion manifests itself, and punishes the will which has invoked it, making itself master of the body, and throwing the person into a violent fit. Nature carries retributive justice with herself, and inflicts immediate punishment for the evil which the individual would do himself.

We had to put her to bed, and dine without her, late and sadly. I told the whole truth to M. Dietrich. He did not approve of the lie which I had told Cesarine, and was astonished to see me — for the first time undoubtedly in my life, he said — using means that were not in strict accordance with truth. I told him then of the threats

of M. de Rivonnière, and confessed that I was so frightened by them that I could have done any thing to preserve my nephew's life. M. Dietrich did not attach much importance to the anger of the marquis. He objected that M. de Rivonnière was a man of honor and intelligence; that in his anger he might, perhaps, lose his head for a moment, but that it was impossible that he should not return to reason in twenty-four hours.

"So," said I, "you will go and undeceive Cesarine, and let her know that my nephew is still free? You will deceive her more than I have, for he is not free."

He promised me to say nothing.

"I have not told the lie," he said: "I will pretend that I am your dupe; and I can do so the more readily, because I cannot admit that a young man, in such a *liaison* as his present one, ought to think of marriage."

Cesarine was completely broken down for several days; then she resumed her active and gay life, and even appeared, by her manner, to encourage all the suitors who flocked about her. Every morning there was an assault by bouquets at the door of the house, every day an assault of visits as soon as the door was opened.

I saw Paul and Marguerite from time to time in the Rue d'Assas. I was confirmed in my belief that their association rendered neither of them happy, and that the child alone received the love and occupied the mind of Paul. Marguerite was a good creature, notwithstanding the fault committed in her youth; but that slip was not the less an obstacle to the marriage which she desired, and which Paul, still more strongly than I, knew to be impossible. One day they quarrelled

in my presence, and called me in as a judge between them.

"If I had not had a child," said Marguerite, "I should never have thought of marriage, for I well know that I do not deserve it; but since I have my Pierre, I am troubled about the future. I tell myself that he will despise his mother by and by, when he is able to understand that she was not deemed worthy to be married. It makes me so sad to think of it, that there are moments when I restrain myself from loving him, so as to become used to sorrow. Ah! I did not understand at the time the wickedness of what I did. I found my mother cruel and full of reproaches; I found Paul good, and having no reproaches to make. But now I am a mother, and I detest myself. I know very well that Paul will never abandon his son, — there is no danger of that; he loves the boy too well, and he is too honest a man for that. But what would become of me if my own son should turn against me?"

"He will love and respect you always," said Paul. "I will answer to you for that, at least, unless by your imprudent complaints you teach him what he ought not to know."

"Then it is all right, is it, to conceal from children that their parents are not married? In order to carry out that deception, it is necessary that you never leave me; and who is going to answer for it that you will not marry another?"

I thought it my duty to interpose. "It is at least certain," said I to Marguerite, "that it has become very difficult for my nephew to make such an honorable and advantageous marriage as a man in his position ought. The sacrifice which he has made to you of his liberty, of his future perhaps,

ought to suffice, my poor child. Remember that thus far all the sacrifices have been on his side, and that you haven't the right to demand more with good grace."

"You are right," she replied, kissing my hands: "you are severe, but you are good. You tell me the truth. He is very gentle, very proud, and very tender, so that I sometimes forget what I owe to him, — my life even!"

She was conquered. She had a good disposition, devoted to justice, but a mind too little developed to enable her to find her way without help and counsel. When she understood her errors, she regretted them sincerely; but she fell into them again, as do those people generally who have not been disciplined by a good primary education. She had instincts both selfish and generous, which she could not distinguish from each other, and which carried her wide of the mark quite frequently. Paul was already a little tired of her purposeless uneasiness, her unfounded jealousy; in a word, of the tendency to injustice and recrimination which a fallen woman seldom knows how to overcome. I went out to walk with him that day, and reproached him for treating Marguerite too much like a child. "Since this unfortunate connection exists," said I, "and you believe it to be your duty never to break it off, try to make it a little less dolorous. Elevate the ideas of this poor woman, and try to smooth the asperities of her character. It seems to me that you do not go to work the right way to make her understand and bless her lot, rather than to deplore it."

"I have said all that any one can say," he replied; "but every day I must begin again. Boys improve and progress all the time, — I see that in my son already; but girls, whose develop-

ment has come from their ruin, learn nothing. Marguerite will learn nothing; it must be my duty to bear with her faults. What she cannot do for herself, I will do for her; and I will work for it as patiently and as gently as I can. Be sure there is no other remedy: it is painful and aggravating sometimes; but who can boast of being perfectly happy in his domestic affairs? I might be legitimately married to a jealous woman, just as I might be towards Marguerite a suspicious and tyrannical lover. Believe me, aunt, in this bad world in which our work and worry pass for happiness, we ought to call any tolerable situation a happy one; and there is no real misfortune except that which crushes or overwhelms our powers. If I had no mistress, I should be compelled to suppress affection, and seek only pleasure. Women who can give me only that are repugnant to me. It is well for me that I have a companion who loves me, who is faithful to me, and for whom I can have some affection when, the effervescence of youth having subsided, we find ourselves still in each other's company. It is worth while for me to endure some caprices, to pardon a little ingratitude, and to disregard some symptoms of impatience. And when I look at that fine boy whom she has given me, who is mine, whom she has nursed and cradled on her bosom through long sleepless nights, I feel really married, closely bound to my family, and contented with my lot."

Paul was at liberty that day. I took him to dine with me at a restaurant, and we chatted for a long time. I also had a holiday: M. Dietrich had gone to superintend some operation at Miraval; Cesarine had probably dined with her cousins.

I returned home at nine o'clock, and

was astonished to find her dining alone in her own room. "I only came back at eight," she explained. "I did not dine with my cousins because I did not feel in the mood to hear their chatter. I went out quite late, and told my aunt not to accompany me. Now, don't scold because I didn't come back until night, and came alone. It was so lovely and so mild, that I took the fancy to ride in a carriage around the lake at a time when the drive was deserted. The time when everybody is at dinner is decidedly the most agreeable to go to the Bois de Boulogne. But where did you dine? I expected to find you at home when I got back."

"I dined with my nephew."

"And with *his wife*?" she asked, looking at me with a singular expression. "Do you know that he has deceived you, and that he isn't married at all?"

"It is just the same," I replied. "He is perhaps bound more strongly than if he were married."

"Bound is the word, eh? I see that you are going to be frank with me."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Nor what you are saying either, my good Pauline. You are getting into deep water; but you need not. I know the whole truth."

"What! what do you know?"

"Listen. Before going to the Bois to think the matter over, I went and made the acquaintance of the beautiful Marguerite."

"You are joking!"

"You shall see. I knew that every evening your Paul left the store to pass the night at the house of one Madame Feron, who rented, or was supposed to rent, a suite of apartments in the Rue d'Assas. I knew, also, that your nephew went there very seldom

in the daytime; and, as it was only four o'clock, I determined to learn the truth to-day."

"Why to-day?"

"Because M. Salvioni, the noble Italian who follows me everywhere, and whom my Aunt Helmina patronizes, made me yesterday, at the opera, a very impassioned declaration, during the ballet of 'Masaniello.' He is very handsome, this descendant of the Strozzi. He is witty and poetical, and speaks with a little foreign accent that is agreeable. He would suit me if I could love him; but I thought again of your nephew: and then I promised to give him a definite answer in two days, which will be to-morrow. It was therefore necessary that I should know to-day whether you hadn't been telling me a little story to confuse me. I asked for Madame Feron, and was shown into a little kennel, where a big baby was playing upon the knees of a very pretty woman. Bertrand climbed the stairs with me; and, as there was no waiting-room to the suite, he had to remain outside on the landing. I entered boldly, and asked Madame Feron for Madame Paul Gilbert. Madame Feron opened the door; and she was too stupid and too old for me to suppose that she was Paul's wife. She appeared embarrassed by my request; and, while she was hesitating, Marguerite herself arose, with her brat in her arms, and came forward, saying bluntly, 'I am Madame Paul Gilbert, at your service. What did you want?'

" 'I expected to find M. Gilbert's aunt here, — Mlle. de Nermont,' I replied.

" 'She went out with Paul a quarter of an hour ago.'

" 'That's too bad. I came to take

her to drive. She promised to meet me here.'

" 'Then perhaps she will return soon. Will you wait for her?'

" 'Thank you, if you will permit me.'

" And then, with all the courtesy of which a washerwoman is capable, 'Come in then, and take a seat. Fernon, take the baby, and give him his supper in the kitchen. Close the doors, so that madame shall not hear him bawl.'

" 'What a handsome child!' said I, pretending to admire the big baby, which was taken out of the room, to my great satisfaction. 'How old is he?'

" 'Thirteen months. He is a little plague: he's just beginning to teeth.'

" 'He's very bright, very pretty.'

" 'Don't he look like his pa?'

" 'M. Paul Gilbert?'

" 'Of course.'

" 'I don't know: I am very little acquainted with him. I think he looks like you.'

" 'Yes? So much the worse. I would rather he looked like Paul.'

" 'That is to say, you love your husband better than yourself.'

" 'Oh, indeed, yes! He is so good. You know his aunt, then, and not him?'

" 'I have seen him once or twice; not more.'

" 'Perhaps you are — but of course not. How stupid I am! Mlle. Dietrich would not go out like you, all alone.'

" 'You have heard, then, of Mlle. Dietrich?'

" 'Yes: the aunt of Paul was her — how shall I say? — her first nurse. She taught her.' I ask your pardon, Pauline dear; but those were the very clear and delicate notions of Margue-

rite as to your duties. I am forced by my pitiless memory to report to you, word for word, her pretty talk.

" 'It was,' I resumed, 'Mlle. de Nermont who told you of Mlle. Dietrich?'

" 'No: it was Paul. One day he went to a ball at her papa's. It seems that they are very rich folks; and the girl wore diamonds and pearls worth millions.'

" 'That was very silly; wasn't it?'

" 'That's what Paul said; but I don't know. Every one is proud of what one has. I have no money, and I am proud of my baby; and whenever I go to the Luxembourg, or to the square, saying to myself that every one thinks him handsome, I am awfully proud, and hold my head as high as if I wore a queen's jewels.'

" This pretty innocence reconciled me with Marguerite. I found that she was neither bad nor perverse; and, seeing that she was so communicative and so open, I felt no aversion towards her. She is one of those chance companions whom a man might take for economy's sake, and wisely too. When a child comes, mere goodness attaches a man to such a one; but he doesn't marry that kind, and the time comes when he casts her off."

" You are talking, my dear, without reflection. You can't appreciate " —

" I beg your pardon: your pupil is no longer under your instruction. Whatever you have taken pains to keep her ignorant of when she was a girl, — and without much curiosity in those days, — she has been condemned to learn by mixing with the world, noticing what passes about her, hearing what is said, and guessing the rest. You may as well know that I have a very clear understanding about M. Paul's *liaison*; for this is what is called a *liaison*, — polite and admissi-

ble word, so as not to say *amour*. You think that the proper word sounds very coarse from my mouth. So it does; but you forced it upon me by calling it a marriage. So I have been compelled to make an examination of the coarse things which constitute the reality. Until then, however, I was innocent enough to believe in a legitimate connection; but Marguerite was stupid and maladroit. When I watched her from interested motives, she was embarrassed; but, when I spoke of bringing some old lace for her to restore, she told me all with touching sincerity. 'No,' said she: 'don't come here again yourself; for I see that you are a noble lady, and perhaps you might be sorry that you had been so good to me when you found that I was not what you supposed.' Then a little condolence on my part, and one or two pleasant words, which drew forth a flood of tears and of confessions. Now I know all,—the adventure with M. Jules, the student; the drowning; the rescue by your nephew; the hiding-place provided by him at Madame Feron's; and then the birth of the child after the relations with Paul, confessed with dreadful detail, for she took me for a married woman; and at last the hope of being married, which her motherhood had excited; the firm resistance of Paul, backed by you; the little domestic jars, her displeasure towards herself, her patience with him. The story was ended off with an enthusiastic and yet comical eulogy of Paul, of you, and of herself; for she is very green, this village girl. It was a mixture of stupid pride and puerile humility. She boasts of excelling every one else in the love and devotion of which she is capable. She closed by saying, 'I am the sinner; but I can

console myself by knowing that I love as no other can. Paul will see! Let him only try to love some one else.' Then, after she had opened her heart to me, she began to inquire who I might be. 'Don't disturb yourself about that,' I replied. 'My name would tell you nothing. I am interested in you, and I pity you: let that suffice. Your position does not scandalize me; only you do wrong to take the name of M. Paul Gilbert. Did he authorize you to do so?'

"No: on the contrary, he forbade me. As he does not wish to receive any of his friends here, he conceals his place of residence altogether; and this suite of apartments stands neither in his name nor in mine. I need to be concealed, too, on account of my mother, who would catch me if she found where I am; for I am still under age. I never go out, except at night with Paul in the streets when it is not very light. When you asked for Madame Paul Gilbert, I had a little fit of stupidity or pride; but no one knows me under that name. To tell the truth, no one knows me at all: I don't show myself. Madame Feron buys everything, does all the errands, brings and carries away the work, and takes the baby out for his airing. For my part, I am a little tired of being shut up as I am; but I work with my hands, and try not to work too much with my poor head.'

"I promised to come and see her again," continued Cesarine; "and I shall keep my word, for I want to talk some more with her. I was afraid that you would come back, although I should have had a pretext to explain my presence at Marguerite's rooms. But I told her that the hour of my

appointment with you was past, and that I must go.

“‘That’s too bad,’ said she, kissing my hand. ‘I like you very much; and I should like to talk with you all day. If I had met a pretty, sweet lady like you who would have employed me, instead of falling in love with Paul, I should have been happier; and in sewing for you, looking out for your interests, washing, waiting upon you, and being a companion for you, I might have been a very good servant-girl.’

“‘That may happen yet,’ said I, laughing. ‘Who knows? If M. Gilbert should abandon you, I would very gladly take you into my employ.’ The word *abandon* hit her a little harder than I supposed it would. She uttered a cry, and for just a moment I thought that our friendship was at an end. She is quick-tempered, the little dear; but I avoided the explosion that threatened, by saying, ‘I know that you are not of the kind of persons who are usually abandoned; but there are ways in which proud lovers get separated. Sometimes a single angry word is sufficient.’

“‘You are right; but Paul will never speak that word. He has too big a heart. He could have but one way to abandon me, as you call it: let him make me see that he is unhappy with me, and I would not wait for my dismissal, but would take it.’

“‘And what would you do with the child?’

“‘Oh! he would not leave me the child: he loves it too much.’

“‘Has he publicly recognized it as his own?’

“‘Indeed he has. It is registered as the son of an unknown mother, so that my family, which is wicked, shall never have any claim upon him.’

“‘Then neither have you any claim upon him. You will lose him in being separated from M. Gilbert.’

“‘It is just that which will make me cling to him, even if I should be unhappy with him. But if he should be unhappy, my poor Paul, I should let him have his Pierre; and I shouldn’t go to find you, my little lady; I should have no more need of any thing. I should go away and die of grief, in obscurity,’ And that is the way we separated.”

“Very well. And after you had been to the Bois de Boulogne to reflect? May I know at what conclusion you arrived?”

“Certainly, this: Paul is my choice still. I love him; and he is the husband whom I want.”

“At the expense of causing the poor Marguerite to die of grief? That you don’t reckon upon!”

“Oh, yes! I reckon upon it; but it will not happen. I shall be very good to her. I shall teach her to understand what she is, what she is worth, what she weighs in the scale, what she ought to accept to preserve the esteem of Paul and my benefits, of which I do not intend to be sparing.”

“And the child?”

“Its father, married to me, will have the means of educating it; and I should be a good mother to it. I have no reason to hate it, the little innocent. Marguerite could come and see it. We would send them into the country; and they would be happier than ever before.”

“With what marvellous facility you arrange matters!”

“There is nothing difficult in life when one is rich, just, and decided in character. I am more energetic and far-seeing than you, my Pauline, because I am more free and less fastidi-

ous. What years have failed to make you know and appreciate, even to lead you to make a definite decision as to the future of your nephew, I knew, I judged, and I have discovered the solution in two hours. You will tell me that I underrate the attachment of Paul for his mistress, and the kind of aversion which he manifests towards me. I reply, that I believe neither in the aversion for myself nor the attachment to her. I saw it all very clearly in that singular and memorable interview which decided the fate of that young man and my own. I have seen still more clearly to-day. He thinks himself bound by duty; and his desperate defence was that of a man who is losing his heart. To-day he is suffering horribly. You don't see it; but I know it by the ingenuous confessions and the clumsy reticence of his mistress. He does not hope for salvation, but accepts the sad destiny which is spread out before him. He is a stoic, I do not forget that; and all the manifestations of his strength of soul attach him to me more and more. Yes; this fallen and vulgar girl to whom he submits, this brat whom he loves tenderly (true stoics are tender; that is logical), that lodging without comforts or attraction, that intense work to support a family which is a burden, and which he is forced to conceal as a shame, that pride which leads him to feign happiness in the midst of it all, — oh! it is grand, very beautiful, very noble. Your nephew is a man; and such a woman as I am is necessary to assume a share in his situation, and to tear him away from it without violence, without remorse, and without crime. Marguerite will weep and lament a little, no doubt; but the prospect of that does not affright me. I will take care of her.

She is a child, a little savage, but very weak. In a year from now she will bless me; and Paul, my husband, will be the happiest of men."

"Better and better! It is arranged for the coming year! In what month and what day is the wedding to come off?"

"Laugh as much as you will, my Pauline. I am stronger than you, I tell you. I have no little scruples and childish qualms of conscience. I have patience in decision, you shall see, little aunt; and so kiss me. I am tired; but I have made up my mind: and so I can go to sleep as calmly as an infant."

She left me as bewildered as if, abandoned by an adventurous guide upon a lonely hill-top, I had lost the power of returning.

Was she not, after all, right? Was she not stronger than myself, than Marguerite, than Paul himself? Wholly absorbed in study, he could not, as she did, analyze the facts of practical life, and resolve its continual enigmas. Who knows if she were not the woman which she boasted of being, the only one he could love on that day when he should discover the loyalty and generosity which were always at the bottom of her most personal designs? A head so active, a soul so much above vengeance and evil instincts, an acceptance of accomplished facts so frank, such intelligence, and so much courage to bring her most impossible undertakings to a happy conclusion, — were all these not enough to obtain pardon for her caprice and coquetry?



XIII.

I FOUND myself thrown back to the point where Cesarine had led me when the threats of the Marquis de

Rivonnière had made me recoil in fright. Where was the marquis? What had become of him? Had he forgotten? Was he absent? If any one could have re-assured me on these points, the romance of Cesarine would not have been so disquieting and impossible.

I resolved to find out something about him, and, on reflection, determined that Bertrand was the man to investigate for me.

He was a singular person. His position was that of footman and something between a groom and a *valet-de-chambre*. *Valet-de-chambre* he could not be, for he did not know how to read and write; which ignorance, singularly enough, did not prevent him from expressing himself as well as any man of the world. He was thirty-five years old, serious, cold, of good bearing, very proud of his elegant form, wearing with ease and dignity his black coat set off with a plait of silk at the shoulder, always clean shaved, and cravated in irreproachable white, discreet, sober, silent, appearing to notice nothing and to hear nothing, but knowing all and understanding every thing, incorruptible always, devoted to Cesarine, and to me for her sake, a little scornful towards the rest of the family.

It was but eleven o'clock; and, M. Dietrich not having returned, Bertrand would probably be in the art-gallery. He liked to remain there, studying perseveringly the regularity of the furnace-registers, the progress of the clock-hands, and the condition of the ornamental plants.

I went down stairs, and found him there as I had expected. He came and stood before me. "Bertrand," said I, "I have some information to ask of you."

"I intended giving some to mademoiselle."

"To me? This evening?"

"To you, this evening, as soon as monsieur should have returned. I know that mademoiselle retires late."

"Well, speak, Bertrand."

"It is about monsieur, the Marquis de Rivonnière."

"Ah! I wanted to ask you about that very person. Have you any news of him?"

"I have. Mlle. Cesarine, who has no secrets from mademoiselle, must have told her all she has done to-day?"

"I know every thing. She has been with you to the Rue d'Assas, and to the Bois de Boulogne."

"Does Mlle. de Nermont know that monsieur the Marquis de Rivonnière assumes disguises to watch Mlle. Cesarine?"

"No. Does Cesarine know it?"

"I do not think she does."

"You should have warned her of it."

"I was not sure of it; and then Mlle. Cesarine, one day, when I brought her a letter from monsieur the marquis, said to me, 'Bring me nothing more from him: let me never hear from him again.' But to-day I recognized M. de Rivonnière so plainly in the costume of a working-man in the Rue d'Assas, that I made up my mind to notify Mlle. de Nermont."

"Bertrand, do you know to whose house Cesarine went in the Rue d'Assas?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. I was charged with the duty of following home the person who goes there every evening from Latour's publishing-house."

"Are you doing right, Bertrand, to be yourself a spy?"

"I believe I am always doing right

when I execute the orders of Mlle. Cesarine."

"Even in secret from her father and me?"

"M. Dietrich has no will in opposition to hers; and you yourself usually come to wish what she desires."

"It is true, because she always wishes to do good; and this time, as usual, there is a good action at the bottom of her curiosity."

"I think so too. Besides, as I am always and everywhere within a step of mademoiselle with a revolver and a dagger upon me, I do not fear that any one will insult her."

"Certainly you would defend her courageously."

"With coolness, mademoiselle; with coolness and presence of mind. It is my duty. Mlle. Cesarine explained it all to me one day, when she said, 'I wish to be able to go anywhere with you.'"

"It is well, my friend. Tell me now if M. de Rivonnière saw Cesarine enter the house where my nephew goes."

"He saw her come out. He was on the door-step when she re-entered her carriage."

"He has probably questioned the porter of that house?"

"Very certainly; for he looked at mademoiselle in a mocking manner, and seemed to wish that she would recognize him. But mademoiselle had other things on her mind, and did not look at him."

"Why do you think that he desired to mock her?"

"Because he is crazy with jealousy, and believes that mademoiselle expected to meet some one there. He has certainly established a counter-mine against me, as one might say. He must have known what I was

charged to discover; and undoubtedly he now knows that monsieur, your nephew, has no expectation of meeting Mlle. Cesarine. It is well that you should know this: you are the person to be notified, mademoiselle. It is for me to execute your orders if you have any to give me for to-morrow."

"I will make arrangements with Mlle. Cesarine. Thanks, and good-evening, Bertrand."

So, notwithstanding the passage of time, — nearly three weeks it was since his threat was made, — the marquis had not desisted from his vengeful projects. He had told me the truth when he said that he was capable of nursing his wrath until it was assuaged, as he had preserved his hopeless love. He was, then, a dangerous man, neither a fool nor wicked perhaps, but incapable of governing his passions. He had spoken of murder without provocation as a lawful act; and he now knew with whom Cesarine was in love! I again cursed the wretched caprice to which she had almost made me consent. I resolved to warn M. Dietrich; and I waited until he should return, to meet him in the passage, and tell him all that had taken place, not forgetting what Bertrand had reported to me. "It is necessary," said I in conclusion, "that you should interpose in some way in this matter. I am powerless. I cannot remove my nephew: his work confines him to Paris; and besides, if I should tell him that any one had threatened him, he would be so much the more strongly determined to face an enmity which he would deem ridiculous, but which I regard as very serious. I have no more control over Cesarine. You are her father: you can take her away. For my part, I must notify the police to keep a watch

on the movements and the disguises of M. de Rivonnière."

"That would be a very serious move," said M. Dietrich; "and it might result in scandal, from which I would save my daughter. I will take her away from here if it is necessary; but first I will make a movement against the marquis. It is with me that he will have a quarrel, if he compromises Cesarine by his foolish jealousy and espionage. Be assured, I will watch, will learn all, and will act promptly; but just now I think that we have no occasion to be anxious about him. He supposes that Cesarine has to-day made a discovery, which of itself is a revenge for him, and that she will think no more of his rival, whose wife and child she has seen; for he cannot be ignorant of any thing that concerns your nephew."

"That is all very well, M. Dietrich: but to-morrow or next week he will know that Cesarine persists in loving Paul; for she is not the woman to conceal her movements and to change her mind. You know that very well yourself."

"I will act to-morrow. Now sleep in peace."

On the morrow, indeed, and at a very early hour, he repaired to the marquis's house. He did not find him in. The marquis was away, they said, on a journey, and had been gone several days. They did not know when he expected to return. To seek in Paris a man in concealment is possible only to the police. I was going, without telling any one my plan, to ask audience of the prefect, when Bertrand, with his usual impassible and haughty air, but with a look which seemed to say, "Pay attention," announced monsieur the Marquis de Rivonnière.

XIV.

THE marquis presented himself as much at ease and with as graceful courtesy as if there had been a parting only the night before on the best of terms. M. Dietrich gave him his hand as usual, but in silence; but Cesarine, whose brow contracted, and who seemed fairly weary of his attentions, said to him in an icy tone, "I didn't expect to see you again, Monsieur de Rivonnière."

"I did not suppose I was placed under a perpetual ban," he replied with that peculiar smile which Bertrand had noticed, and which was, as it were, stereotyped on his pale, tired face.

"You have not been placed under a ban at all," said Cesarine. "It may be that I have let you become aware of my displeasure when you have seemed to lack good breeding; but one pardons much in an old friend, and I did not dream of banishing you. You have deemed it good to banish yourself. It is not the first time that you have gone away out of sulkiness; but you have generally been at some pains to give an explanation of your absence. That was, of course, to preserve the right of returning. This time you have neglected a formality of which I excuse no one. You have ceased to visit us because that course was pleasing to you: you return because you please to do so. But these ways are not pleasing to me. I like to know whether the persons I receive are friends or enemies. If they are of the latter category, I admit them only on my guard. Will you tell me on what footing I ought to receive you? Have as much courage and frankness as you please, but do not suppose that I will tolerate the least lack of respect."

Astounded by this reprimand, the

of M. de Rivonnière, and confessed that I was so frightened by them that I could have done any thing to preserve my nephew's life. M. Dietrich did not attach much importance to the anger of the marquis. He objected that M. de Rivonnière was a man of honor and intelligence; that in his anger he might, perhaps, lose his head for a moment, but that it was impossible that he should not return to reason in twenty-four hours.

"So," said I, "you will go and undeceive Cesarine, and let her know that my nephew is still free? You will deceive her more than I have, for he is not free."

He promised me to say nothing.

"I have not told the lie," he said: "I will pretend that I am your dupe; and I can do so the more readily, because I cannot admit that a young man, in such a *liaison* as his present one, ought to think of marriage."

Cesarine was completely broken down for several days; then she resumed her active and gay life, and even appeared, by her manner, to encourage all the suitors who flocked about her. Every morning there was an assault by bouquets at the door of the house, every day an assault of visits as soon as the door was opened.

I saw Paul and Marguerite from time to time in the Rue d'Assas. I was confirmed in my belief that their association rendered neither of them happy, and that the child alone received the love and occupied the mind of Paul. Marguerite was a good creature, notwithstanding the fault committed in her youth; but that slip was not the less an obstacle to the marriage which she desired, and which Paul, still more strongly than I, knew to be impossible. One day they quarrelled

in my presence, and called me in as a judge between them.

"If I had not had a child," said Marguerite, "I should never have thought of marriage, for I well know that I do not deserve it; but since I have my Pierre, I am troubled about the future. I tell myself that he will despise his mother by and by, when he is able to understand that she was not deemed worthy to be married. It makes me so sad to think of it, that there are moments when I restrain myself from loving him, so as to become used to sorrow. Ah! I did not understand at the time the wickedness of what I did. I found my mother cruel and full of reproaches; I found Paul good, and having no reproaches to make. But now I am a mother, and I detest myself. I know very well that Paul will never abandon his son, — there is no danger of that; he loves the boy too well, and he is too honest a man for that. But what would become of me if my own son should turn against me?"

"He will love and respect you always," said Paul. "I will answer to you for that, at least, unless by your imprudent complaints you teach him what he ought not to know."

"Then it is all right, is it, to conceal from children that their parents are not married? In order to carry out that deception, it is necessary that you never leave me; and who is going to answer for it that you will not marry another?"

I thought it my duty to interpose. "It is at least certain," said I to Marguerite, "that it has become very difficult for my nephew to make such an honorable and advantageous marriage as a man in his position ought. The sacrifice which he has made to you of his liberty, of his future perhaps,

I am young yet, and in a question of honor one man is as good as another. To complain of your conduct would come with bad grace from me, since I have not been able to make my authority prevail, and force you to prudence. I ought to accept the consequences of my tenderness for you; and I do accept them."

He gently disengaged himself from her arms, and went out. She was literally choked with tears, and vowed to me that she would never again go out alone, and thus subject her father to the penalty of her eccentricities.

She kept her promise several days. I spoke to Bertrand to make him agree to carry for her no more letters without showing them to M. Dietrich or to myself. He hesitated long before making any such promise. In his view, Cesarine had the best judgment of any one in the house. If any one could disperse the clouds which had gathered about us, the threatening character of which he very well understood, for he guessed what was not told him, it was Cesarine, and no one else. However, he was conquered by my persistence, and promised. Three days after, he brought me a letter from Cesarine addressed to M. de Rivonnière, at the same time asking me to request M. Dietrich to settle up with him. "I have never betrayed good masters," he said; "and you have forced me to make a bad promise. Mlle. Cesarine will have no more confidence in me. I cannot remain in a house where I am not esteemed."

I did not know what to say. This man was right: it was too late to restrain Cesarine. To deprive her of her most trusty and most devoted servant was to drive her to commit acts of yet greater imprudence. I returned the letter to Bertrand, and expected that Cesa-

rine would come and tell me what it contained; for it was very seldom that she did not ask advice as soon as she had acted on impulse.

She did not come, and my anxiety was renewed. This time, I feared no longer for my nephew. I was sure that Cesarine had not seen him again; but I feared for M. Dietrich, whom the conduct of the marquis had greatly irritated, and who appeared not in the least disposed to forgive it.

The next morning, Cesarine came into my room, saying, "I am going out: will you go with me?"

"Certainly," I replied; "and I should not suppose that you would like to go out without me, in the circumstances in which you have placed your father."

"Don't scold me," she said: "I have resolved to repair my faults, cost what it may. You are coming?"

"Where are we going?"

"I will tell you after we have started."

Orders had been already given to the coachman by Bertrand; and we rode through the Champs Elysées, without any explanation from Cesarine. When we reached the Place de la Concorde, she said, "We are going to buy some flowers at Lemichez's, Rue des Trois Couronnes."

We alighted in the garden of that florist, and walked through his greenhouses, where Cesarine selected some very costly plants. At three o'clock, she looked at her watch, and, at the same moment, we saw the Marquis de Rivonnière enter. "This is one of my friends," said Cesarine to the clerk who accompanied us. "We will carry away the flowers in our two carriages. Will you be good enough to put them in the carriages carefully, so that they shall not be broken? and tell them that I

will pay for them at once." We therefore remained in the green-house, whither the marquis came to join us. "Thanks, my friend," said she, extending her hand to him: "you have come to my rendezvous. You, of course, understood that I could not, under present circumstances, admit you to the presence of my father. Sit down on this bench. It's a nice place to have a chat.

"Monsieur de Rivonnière, I have reflected: I have examined my conduct. I have condemned it, and it is to you I wish to make the confession. I have not betrayed you, seeing that I never had any love for you; and I have not deceived you by laying my refusal of you to a pronounced aversion to marriage. I was sincere. I loved no one, and I believed that my love of liberty would never be satiated. It has been, much sooner than I expected. The world wearies me; liberty has frightened me. I have seen some one who pleases me, whom I shall not marry perhaps, who probably will never know that I love him, but whom it is impossible for me not to love. Shall I tell you all? I believed myself a very strong woman: I am but a weak child, and so much the weaker because I did not believe in love, and did not put myself on my guard against it. I am *his* now, and I shall die of shame and grief because my passion is not reciprocated. If you long for vengeance, be satisfied. I am as much punished as is possible, for having preferred an unknown person to a tried friend. But you are neither cruel nor egotistic nor vindictive; and, if you have had appearances against you in the events which have made you lose the affection of my father, the fault is mine, mine only. I did not understand you; I have misjudged you; I was

suspicious of you. Your wrongs were my work: I have exasperated you; frightened you; cast you into a sort of delirium. I ought to have told you the first day what I tell you now. My friend, pity me! I am unhappy. Be good. Have mercy on me!"

Speaking thus, with an emotion that rendered her more beautiful than ever, Cesarine made as though she would kneel to M. de Rivonnière. The latter, full of astonishment and despair, prevented her, crying, "What are you going to do? It is you who are foolish and cruel. Do you wish to kill me? What do you ask? what do you require of me? Have I understood? I believed it a caprice. For my consolation, you tell me it is a passion! And you wish, — my God! My God! what is it that you wish?"

"What your heart and your conscience proclaim to you, my friend," she answered, still all the time inclining towards him, and holding his trembling hands in hers. "I want you to pardon my lack of esteem, my ingratitude, my silence. When you said to me, 'Confess your love for another, and I will remain your friend,' — for you have said that, — I was compelled to believe you. It was your justice, it was your honor, which spoke simultaneously. I believed it a snare. That was my fault, and the cause of your disappointment. My mistrust has deceived you. You have believed it a caprice, say you? That might well be. So you have treated me as a fantastic child, whom one would protect and save in spite of herself. You have regarded that as a duty, and have employed all the means in your power to fulfil it. Now you discover the truth: you see that it is a passion, and that I am suffering frightfully. Your duty is changed. It is for you to sustain me,

to pity me, to console me; if it is possible, to love me still! — to love me as a sister, to devote yourself to me as a tender brother! Do not cause me the terrible sorrow of losing my best friend, at the moment when I have the most need of him."

And she threw her arms around his neck and embraced him, as she would have embraced M. Dietrich when she was bent upon conquering him. She could not fail to succeed thus with the marquis, — he was conquered already.

"You kill me!" said he; "and I kiss the hand which gives the blow. Ah! how well you are aware of your sway over me, and how relentlessly you abuse it! Come, you have triumphed. What must I do? Are you going to demand that I bring to your feet the ingrate who disdains you?"

"Ah!" she cried, "that is the great question. If he suspected my passion, I should die of grief and shame. No: there is nothing for you to do but to accept the fact of my being enamoured of another, and to love me well enough to ask my father's pardon for the imputation of wrongs which you have made to him. Tell him the truth, accuse me, explain your own conduct as you please. Tell him that you have no other ambition than to play towards me the part of guardian angel. Justify yourself, give him your word of honor for the future, and leave me to reconcile you. It will not be difficult. He loves you so much, my poor father; he is so unhappy in his disagreement with you."

The marquis hesitated to make this promise with reference to M. Dietrich. But Cesarine wept so much and so effectively, that he promised to come to the house that very evening; and he came.

She had required me to be silent, in

regard to this interview which she had so skilfully brought about, because she wished it to seem that the marquis had come of his own accord.

I hesitated about deceiving M. Dietrich. "Can you blame me?" she cried. "Whatever I contrive, to save the life of my father, ought to seem to you a sacred task, that I have arranged with energy, and carried through with tact and devotion. If I had followed your advice of remaining quiet, of hiding myself, of committing no more of what you call my acts of imprudence, the resentment of these two men would have perpetuated itself, and would have led, sooner or later, to a collision. Thanks to me, they will be more attached to each other than ever; and you shall be forever at rest in your mind with regard to your nephew. M. de Rivonnière is not so chivalrous and so generous as I have told him. He has the instincts of a tiger beneath his charming manner. But I count upon making him what he ought to be; and I shall thus render him a great service, for which he will give me credit sooner or later. When one cannot fight with a wild beast, it may be wheedled into tameness. I committed a great fault the day I lost patience with him."

M. Dietrich, surprised by the visit of the marquis, accepted his expressions of penitence as frankly as Cesarine had foreseen. Poor Rivonnière was as pale as death. It was easy to see that he had suffered torture on that terrible day. His self-abasement gave great weight to the vow which he made to respect the liberty of Cesarine, and to remain her devoted friend. M. Dietrich embraced him. Cesarine at once held out her two hands to him, and then seated herself at the piano, and played to him, in a most expressive

manner, his favorite airs. His nerves were unstrung. The marquis wept like a child, and went away conquered but blessed.

"Well, mademoiselle," said Bertrand, whom I met in the hall after the door had closed on M. de Rivonnière, "you were right to let me carry the letter. I told you that there was no one like Mlle. Cesarine to arrange matters. She thought about it, she willed it, she wrote, she has spoken, and the thing is done."

It was true. The thing was done. Was Cesarine, then, deep in ruses and cruelties? No: she was fruitful of resource and facile in execution. She threw herself into the part she had to play so thoroughly, that she cast out all the emotions which were the fruit of them. She firmly believed in her own inspiration, in her woman's tact; and she persuaded herself that she was compassing the safety of others, when she was only drowning them to give place to herself.

She was therefore, as usual, mistress of the situation. She had induced her father to accept every thing; she had paralyzed the vengeance of the marquis; she had surprised and worried me to the point where I could no longer find good reasons for resisting her. Only Paul remained to be conquered; and, as she remarked, that matter had been much simplified. The forces of her will, having but this one object to attain, were increased ten-fold. "What do you intend to do?" I asked. "Are you going to attack and provoke him once more, after the bad result of your first advances?"

"I have blundered once," she replied, "and I shall not do so again. I shall take another course, exactly what, I cannot tell. I shall be on the watch, and take my chance. It will come,

never fear. Human affairs always bring their contingent of unexpected succor to the will which waits for an opportunity."

The fatal chance really came; but in the midst of circumstances so complicated, that it is necessary to go back a little.

XV.

MARGUERITE had not concealed from Paul the visit of Cesarine; and she had described the stranger so well, that he had no difficulty in recognizing her. He had told me the story; and I had explained. It was no longer possible to conceal the truth from him. Little by little he learned all; but we were at great pains not to speak of it before Marguerite, whose jealousy would have been kindled by it.

Paul's nobility of character shone forth under these new and trying circumstances. As he was in the habit of merely laughing at me when I questioned him, I adjured him, one evening when we were walking together, to answer me seriously once for all. "Haven't I already done so?" he asked with surprise. "Why do you suppose that I could change my sentiments and my desire?"

"Because circumstances are modifying the situation every moment; because M. Dietrich will consent; because I shall be forced to consent; because M. de Rivonnière will resign himself to the situation; because you are not very happy with Marguerite; and because you are not bound to her by a real duty. Her lot and that of her child assured, nothing condemns you to sacrifice, to a woman whom you do not love, a most brilliant future and a most flattering conquest."

"Aunt," he replied, "you play upon the word *love*. I do love Marguerite as I love my child; because she has given me this child, and because she is but a child herself. That tender indulgence, which weakness naturally inspires in a man, is a very deep and a very healthy sentiment. He does not give the violent emotions of a romantic passion; but he fulfils honest duties, and leaves no place for a yearning after the more exciting passions. I am of a sober and staid nature. That requirement which is imperious in others is in me but moderately developed. I am not attracted by feverish pleasures. My nerves are not excitable; my mind is scarcely at all poetical; an ideal is for me but a chimera, — that is to say, a monster with a fine but deceitful countenance. In my estimation, the charm of a woman is not in the extraordinary development of her will: on the contrary, it is in the tender and generous surrender of her powers. Perfect happiness existing nowhere, — for I do not call happiness the transient intoxication of certain situations that are envied, — I have taken my happiness at my own door; I have made it suitable to myself; I intend to keep it; and I defy Mlle. Dietrich to persuade me that she has any thing more desirable to offer me. If she should succeed in disquieting me, by working upon my senses or my imagination, upon the weak or the brutal part of my nature, I should still know how to resist the temptation; and, if I felt in any danger of yielding to it, I should make a grand finish to her hopes. I would marry Marguerite."

"Marry Marguerite! That is not possible, my dear boy."

"It is not easy, I know; but it is not impossible. The union would wound

your very proper pride. Therefore, I will not resolve upon it until the last extremity."

"What do you call the last extremity?"

"The danger of falling into a humiliation worse than that of saddling myself with the past of a ruined girl, — the danger of yielding to the domination of a haughty and imperious woman. Marguerite will never play with my jealousy. She has the great advantage of not being capable of inspiring me with that passion. I am sure of the present. The past does not belong to me; and I have never been disturbed myself on account of it, nor reproached her with it. The man who seduced her exists no more, either for her or for myself. She has annihilated him by refusing his aid, and by desiring not to know what is become of him. Never have either of us heard of him. He is, probably, dead. I can, therefore, easily forget that I am not her first love, in the certainty that I shall be her last."

Some days after this conversation, I found Marguerite in high spirits. I had no great pleasure in conversing with her; but, as I went to see an old friend in her neighborhood every week, I used to inquire after Pierre on the way. Marguerite had a quantity of work to do that had just been sent in; and I recognized it as sent by Cesarine. "It was that pretty lady, your friend, who brought me this," she said. "She came this morning, on foot, by the Luxembourg, followed by her servant bearing this lace. She staid to chat with me nearly an hour. She gave me good advice about the health of baby, who is troubled by his teeth. She inquired about every thing that concerned me with so much goodness — oh! she is an angel; and I love her

well enough to cast myself into the fire for her. She wouldn't tell me her name. You will; won't you?"

"No: because she doesn't wish it."

"Does Paul know it?"

"I can't tell you."

"It is curious that she should make a mystery of it. It is some charitable lady, who hides the good she does."

"Do you really need this work, Marguerite?"

"Yes: we haven't had much to do for a good while. Mme. Feron, who is quite proud, is worried by it, and pretends sometimes not to be hungry, so as not to be an expense to Paul. But she suffers many privations; and the baby interferes with our work. Paul does all he can for us, — perhaps more than he is really able; for he retains his old habits of industry and economy still, and I am sometimes troubled by the way he has to pinch himself."

"Accept something from me, my child, and you shall no more be an expense to him."

"He forbade me; and I have sworn not to disobey him. Besides, we are getting along very well. My pretty lady will furnish me work. Here is enough now for a long time, God be thanked! She pays us handsomely, — double what we should have asked."

"But this quantity of work and the double price seem very much like charity. Are you not afraid that Paul will be displeased with you for accepting it?"

"No one will tell him. The charity, if there is any, is all to the profit of Mme. Feron, who needs it; and it is for her I have accepted it. You would not prevent that good woman from earning her living? Besides, Paul wouldn't have the right."

I thought it my duty to say no

more; but I saw that fire had been opened, and that Cesarine was laying plans to make Marguerite smooth her mysterious way.

The next morning, I had a new surprise. I found Marguerite in the entry before Cesarine's door. She had received from her the following letter: —

"My dear child, — I have forgotten something important in regard to the way the lace is to be cut. It is necessary that you should yourself take the measures. I send you my carriage. Enter, and come here.

"THE LADY WHO SENT THE LACE"

"Did Paul consent?" I demanded.

"Paul had gone to the store. But there was no time to reflect; and then I was so happy to get into the handsome carriage, all lined with satin like a princess's dress; and the horses! servants before and behind! and it went so fast that I was afraid we should run down some one. I wanted to cry out, 'Look out, there!' Ah! I never had so much pleasure before."

Cesarine, who was dressing, bade Marguerite enter. I followed her.

"Oh, ho! you are interested in our little business," said she, with a malicious smile. "There is no way to conceal any thing from you. When I only wanted to fix up my room after your ideas, and surprise you!" Then, addressing Marguerite, she showed her some things which she pretended she wished to have measured, and told her to be very exact about the pattern.

"But, madame," cried Marguerite, taking the gold scissors, and casting a dazed look around upon the elegant furniture and the costly jewels, "tell me where I am, and whether you are a queen or a princess!"

"Neither," she replied. "I am scarcely more noble than you, my child. My father has made a fortune by work. That is why I am interested in persons who live by their labor. But it is useless for me to make a mystery which Mlle. de Nermont would betray. My name is Cesarine Dietrich, — a young lady whom M. Paul does not like at all."

"He is wrong, very wrong: you are so amiable and so good!"

"He has told you quite the contrary; has he not?"

"No: he has told me nothing. Oh, yes! he did think you dressed too finely at the ball; but that's all. If he knew you ever so little, he would pardon that."

"He has not told you to ask pardon for him," said I, a little severely, to Marguerite.

She looked at me in amazement. Cesarine took her by the arm, and led her about the room and through all that part of the house. She was amused by Marguerite's astonishment, her innocent questions, her ideas — sometimes correct, sometimes very silly — about the things she saw. Walking about in this manner, Cesarine escaped from my control, and played the part of Mephistopheles to this Marguerite.

Seeing that Cesarine was resolved to put me aside for the moment, I left her room, whither she led Marguerite, and kept her there a long time. Then Cesarine undertook to conduct her back to the carriage, which was to carry her home; and, in crossing the hall, they found me there with the Marquis de Rivonnière. And then occurred an unexpected scene, which was fraught with grave consequences.

"Good-morning, marquis," said Cesarine, who came in first. "I was expect-

ing you. You are going to breakfast with us?"

At this moment, and as M. de Rivonnière was advancing to kiss the hand of his sovereign, he found himself face to face with Marguerite, who followed her. He stopped an instant as if paralyzed; and Marguerite, who could neither conceal any thing, nor restrain herself in the least, uttered a loud cry, and started back.

"Who is it?" asked Cesarine.

"Jules!" cried Marguerite, staring at the marquis as if she saw a ghost.

M. de Rivonnière had recovered his self-possession, and said with a smile, "Who? Jules? What does this pretty girl mean?"

"Isn't your name Jules?" she asked in great confusion.

"No," said Cesarine: "you have been deceived by a resemblance of some kind. His name is Jacques de Rivonnière. Come, my dear. Marquis, I will return."

She led her away. "That is your poor, abandoned victim," said I to M. de Rivonnière. "Confess it."

"Yes, it is she. Do you know her?"

"Undoubtedly. She is my nephew's mistress. How is it that you did not know as much, — you, who have prowled so long about his house?"

"I have known it a very short time. But how could I expect to meet her here? In the name of Heaven, do not tell Cesarine that I am that Jules" —

"If you wish to deceive her" —

Cesarine returned. Her first words were, "Ah! now tell me, marquis, why she called you Jules. Did she, then, never find out who you were? She swears that it was a simple student by the name of Morin, and that, notwithstanding your grand ap-

ble word, so as not to say *amour*. You think that the proper word sounds very coarse from my mouth. So it does; but you forced it upon me by calling it a marriage. So I have been compelled to make an examination of the coarse things which constitute the reality. Until then, however, I was innocent enough to believe in a legitimate connection; but Marguerite was stupid and maladroit. When I watched her from interested motives, she was embarrassed; but, when I spoke of bringing some old lace for her to restore, she told me all with touching sincerity. 'No,' said she: 'don't come here again yourself; for I see that you are a noble lady, and perhaps you might be sorry that you had been so good to me when you found that I was not what you supposed.' Then a little condolence on my part, and one or two pleasant words, which drew forth a flood of tears and of confessions. Now I know all,—the adventure with M. Jules, the student; the drowning; the rescue by your nephew; the hiding-place provided by him at Madame Feron's; and then the birth of the child after the relations with Paul, confessed with dreadful detail, for she took me for a married woman; and at last the hope of being married, which her motherhood had excited; the firm resistance of Paul, backed by you; the little domestic jars, her displeasure towards herself, her patience with him. The story was ended off with an enthusiastic and yet comical eulogy of Paul, of you, and of herself; for she is very green, this village girl. It was a mixture of stupid pride and puerile humility. She boasts of excelling every one else in the love and devotion of which she is capable. She closed by saying, 'I am the sinner; but I can

console myself by knowing that I love as no other can. Paul will see! Let him only try to love some one else!' Then, after she had opened her heart to me, she began to inquire who I might be. 'Don't disturb yourself about that,' I replied. 'My name would tell you nothing. I am interested in you, and I pity you: let that suffice. Your position does not scandalize me; only you do wrong to take the name of M. Paul Gilbert. Did he authorize you to do so?'

"No: on the contrary, he forbade me. As he does not wish to receive any of his friends here, he conceals his place of residence altogether; and this suite of apartments stands neither in his name nor in mine. I need to be concealed, too, on account of my mother, who would catch me if she found where I am; for I am still under age. I never go out, except at night with Paul in the streets when it is not very light. When you asked for Madame Paul Gilbert, I had a little fit of stupidity or pride; but no one knows me under that name. To tell the truth, no one knows me at all: I don't show myself. Madame Feron buys every thing, does all the errands, brings and carries away the work, and takes the baby out for his airing. For my part, I am a little tired of being shut up as I am; but I work with my hands, and try not to work too much with my poor head.'

"I promised to come and see her again," continued Cesarine; "and I shall keep my word, for I want to talk some more with her. I was afraid that you would come back, although I should have had a pretext to explain my presence at Marguerite's rooms. But I told her that the hour of my

appointment with you was past, and that I must go.

"‘That’s too bad,’ said she, kissing my hand. ‘I like you very much; and I should like to talk with you all day. If I had met a pretty, sweet lady like you who would have employed me, instead of falling in love with Paul, I should have been happier; and in sewing for you, looking out for your interests, washing, waiting upon you, and being a companion for you, I might have been a very good servant-girl.’

"‘That may happen yet,’ said I, laughing. ‘Who knows? If M. Gilbert should abandon you, I would very gladly take you into my employ.’ The word *abandon* hit her a little harder than I supposed it would. She uttered a cry, and for just a moment I thought that our friendship was at an end. She is quick-tempered, the little dear; but I avoided the explosion that threatened, by saying, ‘I know that you are not of the kind of persons who are usually abandoned; but there are ways in which proud lovers get separated. Sometimes a single angry word is sufficient.’

"‘You are right; but Paul will never speak that word. He has too big a heart. He could have but one way to abandon me, as you call it: let him make me see that he is unhappy with me, and I would not wait for my dismissal, but would take it.’

"‘And what would you do with the child?’

"‘Oh! he would not leave me the child: he loves it too much.’

"‘Has he publicly recognized it as his own?’

"‘Indeed he has. It is registered as the son of an unknown mother, so that my family, which is wicked, shall never have any claim upon him.’

"‘Then neither have you any claim upon him. You will lose him in being separated from M. Gilbert.’

"‘It is just that which will make me cling to him, even if I should be unhappy with him. But if he should be unhappy, my poor Paul, I should let him have his Pierre; and I shouldn’t go to find you, my little lady; I should have no more need of any thing. I should go away and die of grief, in obscurity,’ And that is the way we separated.”

"Very well. And after you had been to the Bois de Boulogne to reflect? May I know at what conclusion you arrived?”

"Certainly, this: Paul is my choice still. I love him; and he is the husband whom I want.”

"At the expense of causing the poor Marguerite to die of grief? That you don’t reckon upon!”

"Oh, yes! I reckon upon it; but it will not happen. I shall be very good to her. I shall teach her to understand what she is, what she is worth, what she weighs in the scale, what she ought to accept to preserve the esteem of Paul and my benefits, of which I do not intend to be sparing.”

"And the child?”

"Its father, married to me, will have the means of educating it; and I should be a good mother to it. I have no reason to hate it, the little innocent. Marguerite could come and see it. We would send them into the country; and they would be happier than ever before.”

"With what marvellous facility you arrange matters!”

"There is nothing difficult in life when one is rich, just, and decided in character. I am more energetic and far-seeing than you, my Pauline, because I am more free and less fastidi-

despised him, and paid no further attention to him.

She thought she had found in the marquis a rebellious, but weak slave, whom a turn of her hand would forever subdue. She was mistaken. She had, without knowing it, changed the character of this man, whose heart was generous, but whose intellect was not great. For several years she had drawn him in her suite, honoring him with the title of friend, but abusing his submission; confiding to him, in her fits of vanity, her theories of grand diplomacy, which had been effectual in governing her relatives, her friends, and him. At first, the marquis had been provoked at what seemed to him precocious perversity, and he had tried to dissuade her. Then he saw that Cesarine used only allowable means, and subdued others only by rendering them happy. Such was at least her pretence, her illusions; the justification which she claimed, as do all despots, of her invasions, and of which she was herself the first dupe. The marquis was overcome by her sophisms, and he returned to her side without being any longer disquieted. But once more he began to suffer, to distrust, and to fall back upon his fixed idea, — to fight against her and against his preferred rival, whoever he might be.

She did not hold him by as strong cords as she supposed. He had studied in her school the art of not yielding, and he had not, like her, feminine delicacy in the choice of means. Therefore, it occurred to him, after the explanation which I have just reported, to awaken the jealousy of Paul, and to bring about a duel, in spite of the arrangements of Cesarine. He had given his word, but he could no longer keep it; and, moreover, he believed himself absolved because Cesarine had violated

her own agreement in concealing the name of his rival, to the injury of the absolute confidence which she had promised him. This was, at least, the explanation which he gave me, after having committed the acts which I am now about to narrate.

He left us immediately after breakfast, to write to Marguerite the following letter, which was carried to her by Dubois: —

“If I pretended not to recognize you this morning, it was only because I did not wish to compromise you. But the persons at whose house we met know all; and I have learned from them that you hope to marry your new protector. The fault was all mine, and your unhappy position is my work. I wish to repair, as far as I can, the injury I have done you. I appreciated and admired the pride which led you to do as you did with my gift; but now you are a mother, and you have no right to refuse what I offer you. Accept, then, a pretty country-house and a little lot of land, which will set at rest forever any fears of coming to want. You need never see me again; and you can preserve your relations with the father of your child, as they must be very sweet to you. Whenever those relations become painful, you can break them without danger to the future of your boy, and without fear for yourself. Perhaps, also, seeing you in good circumstances, M. Paul Gilbert may decide to marry you. Accept, then, Marguerite, the disinterested reparation I offer you. It is your right, it is your duty as a mother.

“If you wish for fuller information, write me.

“MARQUIS DE RIVONNIÈRE”

Marguerite at first crumpled the letter in her hand with suspicion, not fully

understanding it. But Mme. Feron, who could read better, and was more practical, read it over, and explained all its terms to her. Mme. Feron was very honest, and very much devoted to Paul and his friend; but she expected the rupture of their relations, and understood the difficulties of the situation. It seemed to her the duty of Marguerite towards her son to accept the means of existence and the opportunity of liberty. Marguerite, who desired to be married in order to preserve the dignity of her position as a mother, fell into the monstrous mistake of being willing to accept for the child of Paul the price of her first slip. She immediately sent Mme. Feron to the marquis. He gave the promised explanation, in a gift of a magnitude to surpass the hopes of the two women. Marguerite had nothing to do but sign a paper. He gave her a deed of a good little farm in Normandy, which she was supposed to have bought, and of which she could take immediate possession.

When Marguerite had this document before her, she spelled it all out with care, to assure herself of the validity of the act, and of the respectful and delicate form in which it was couched. As the Feron read each expression to her, she followed it with eye and finger, her heart beating, and perspiration on her brow. "Come," said her companion, "sign quickly, and it will all be done. Here are two copies. You are to keep one, and the other I shall return to the marquis. I shall get back before Paul comes. I have two hours. He will suspect nothing, provided you never speak of it to his aunt, nor to Mlle. Dietrich, nor to any one in the world. I told the marquis that you would accept, only on condition of its being kept an absolute secret."

Marguerite trembled in every limb. "My God!" said she, "I don't know why I imagine myself signing my shame. I resign my position as an honest woman."

"You might as well do it, my poor Marguerite: you will never be regarded as an honest woman, when you are not married, although Paul loves you very much, I am sure. But his aunt will never consent to your marriage. Besides, this signature pledges you to nothing. You are not obliged to go and live in Normandy, or to tell Paul that you have property. I will go and get your rents, without his knowing any thing. In one short day the railroad will carry you there and bring you back, the marquis has told me so. If, some day, you should quarrel with Paul, for that may happen, — you worry him very much sometimes, — well, then you will go and live as a small farmer in the country, with your boy, whom he will let you carry away for his happiness and health. I suppose that this poor Paul, who works and pinches to give us the necessaries of life, may die at last. What will become of you and your child? Will you live on the charity of his aunt, and of Mlle. Dietrich? These chances don't come but once. You know very well that the work of two women isn't enough to bring up a young man of good family. Then your Pierre will be a mechanic, scarcely knowing how to read and write. As for that, they are happy enough, the mechanics; but Pierre is a well-born child. He is the grandson of a doctor, and noble on his grandmother's side. You ought to make a country gentleman of him, and be able to educate him; otherwise, he will reproach you for his hard lot."

"But if he should reproach me for having a better?"

"Need he know whence it comes? Children never rake up such things. They take the good fortune which they can get; and one should sacrifice pride to their interests."

Marguerite signed. The Feron fled without giving her time for reflection.

The marquis had not expected that Paul could remain long in ignorance of the contract, which he hastened to deposit with his lawyer, and which he desired to be recorded as soon as might be. He knew Marguerite: he was sure she was incapable of keeping a secret. A little circumstance which was not premeditated led quickly to the expected result. In taking leave of Mme. Feron, he gave her, for Marguerite, a little jewel-box, which he told her was the usual *pot-de-vin*. At this word *pot-de-vin*, Marguerite, who did not understand that he meant a sign of ownership, and whom Mme. Feron had found in tears, began to laugh, with the facility with which children pass from one emotion to another. "Is his wine then so very good," she said, "that he gives so little of it at a time?" She opened the box, and found a diamond ring of great value. Once she would have been angry; but she had seen, that very morning, Cesarine's jewels, and, although she had tried not to covet them, their dazzling brightness remained in her memory. She put the ring on her finger, declaring to Feron that she would put it away in the box, and hide it again. "No," said the other: "you must sell it. It would betray you. Give it to me now; and I will bring you back the money. Money isn't signed, and Paul won't look where we will put ours. He never knows what we have: he is satisfied to ask us if we need any thing. Now we can tell him that we want nothing; and,

if he is astonished, we can show him the work. He can't find any thing out of the way in Mlle. Dietrich's giving us work."

Marguerite hid the ring. It was too late to sell it. Paul would soon return; and he did quickly return with me. I had dined early alone, so as to go to his office. He had written me that he was a little uneasy, because the boy was ill.

There was nothing serious the matter with the child. I had been telling Paul, as we walked, of the visit of Marguerite to Cesarine, first making him promise not to blame Marguerite for her confidence, in the fear of awakening his suspicion. He was very much disturbed by seeing the benefits of Mlle. Dietrich insinuating themselves into his household. "If she expects to catch me in that way, she is mistaken," said he. "She is stupidly clumsy, this grand diplomate of yours."

I told him, that, until further developments, the best course was to appear not to perceive what was going on at home. He promised me it should be so. We could not have dreamed of the serious events which had already taken place.

Re-assured as to the health of the boy, I was about to retire, when Paul said to me that something very unusual must be going on at his house. Neither Marguerite nor Madame Feron had dined: they were eating in secret in the kitchen, and talking together in a low voice, becoming silent or pretending to sing when they heard him approaching. "They seem to me a little dazed," said I. "I have noticed that. It is the effect of the ride in the 'master's carriage,' and the sight of the marvellous things in the Dietrich house, which she is narrating to her compan-

ion ; or else it is due to the joy of so much beautiful work to do."

Paul feigned to accept that explanation ; but his suspicion was aroused. He led me to the door, saying, "Mlle. Dietrich's attentions are getting to be a bore, aunt. She introduces her own folly of spirit, and her own confusion, into my dwelling. She forces me to occupy myself with her, to distrust every one about me, to watch my poor Marguerite, who never before went out of the house without my permission, and whom I must scold this evening."

"Don't scold her, but take a few hundred francs, and carry her away immediately into the country."

"Bah ! Mlle. Dietrich, thanks to M. Bertrand, would unearth us in two days. I must remain in the neighborhood of Paris, or I should lose sight of my boy, whom these two women do not know how to take care of. I see only one way, — to let Mlle. Dietrich know in very plain terms that I do not desire any assistance from her in my family affairs, and that I will not have her father's protection for myself."

Paul was much excited when I left him. The name of Cesarine irritated him ; her image beset him. I saw with terror that he was rapidly coming to hate her, and love is so near hate ! yet I could do nothing to conjure away the danger.

Paul, feeling himself carried away by his anger, determined to wait until the next day before notifying Marguerite not to go out without his permission. He retired early to his working-room ; but he could not work. A vague dread oppressed him. He threw himself on his bed, and could not sleep. About midnight, he heard a noise in the bedroom, and noiselessly approached the open door to see if the child was asleep. He saw Marguerite, seated be-

fore a table, and watching the glitter of something bright in her hand. The poor child could not sleep : the brilliancy of the diamonds had turned her head. She wished to feast on the brightness of the ring before separating from it, and was saying "good-by" to it as she closed the jewel-box, when Paul, who had come near her without her hearing him, snatched it from her hand to look at it.

She uttered a peevish cry. "Be silent !" said Paul, in a low tone. "Don't wake baby ! Follow me to my room. If he awakes, we shall hear him. Now listen," he added, when he had led her, stupefied and cold with fright, to the adjoining room. "I don't want to scold you. You are as silly as a child of seven. Don't answer me : don't raise your voice. It is important above every thing else that baby should sleep. Why are you so terrified ? What you have done is not so serious. I shall send back this trinket to the lady who gave it to you. You know well enough that you should receive no gifts except from me ; and you shall not, at least unless you wish to leave me."

"Leave you !" said she, sobbing, "never. Do you want to drive me away ? Then return me my ring. You surely do not want me to die of hunger ?"

"Marguerite, you are silly. I do not want to leave you ; but I insist that you shall cause the protection I assure you to be respected. I do not wish you to receive any presents at all ; above all, I do not wish you to go in search of them."

"I did not go to his house, I solemnly declare," cried Marguerite, who had lost her presence of mind, and did not perceive the mistake Paul had made.

"His house !" said he, surprised. "Who is *he* ?"

"Mlle. Dietrich," she replied, thinking too late of the lie that might have saved her.

"Why did you say *his*? I wish to know."

"I did not say *his*; or, if I did, it is because you confused me with your angry manner."

"Marguerite, you cannot lie: you have never lied. One single thing, but an important thing, has bound me to you, — your sincerity. Don't trifle with that, or we are both lost. Why did you say *his* instead of *her*? Answer; for I will know."

Marguerite could not resist this final appeal. She fell at the feet of Paul, and confessed every thing: she recounted all the details, showed him the marquis's letter, and the pretended bill of sale, that is to say, the gift. She wanted to tear it up; but Paul forbade her. He took possession of the deed and the jewel-box; and then, seeing that she was writhing in convulsions of grief, he raised her, and spoke gently to her. "Be calm," he said, "and comfort yourself. I forgive you. You have followed maternal instinct too far, and did not understand the injury you were doing me. It is the first time that I have had a reproach to make to you. It shall be the last, shall it not?"

"Oh, yes! For I would rather die than" —

"Don't talk of dying. You don't belong to yourself. Now go to bed. To-morrow we can speak more calmly."

Paul returned to his room, and wrote me the following letter: —

"To-morrow, when you receive this letter, my darling aunt, I shall have killed the pretended Jules Morin, or he will have killed me. You know who he is, and where Marguerite met him this morning. But you do not know that

he has induced Marguerite already to accept from him the means of existence, with the expectation, announced in writing, that this consideration will induce me to marry her. I don't know whether this is intended as a provocation, or is only a stupid act of impertinence, or what part in this intrigue Mlle. Dietrich has had. I shall certainly believe that she has, with some design I cannot comprehend, brought about the meeting between Marguerite and her seducer. Whatever that design may have been, if God gives me help, for my cause is just, I shall very soon have deprived Mlle. Dietrich of her slavish cavalier, and shall have wiped out the stain which he has imprinted on my companion. While he lived, I could not legally adopt any course I might choose towards her, without making you blush before him; he dead, it will seem to you, as to me, that he never existed; and I shall have purged myself of the doubt he has cast on my honor. If fate is against me, you will receive this letter as my last testament. I bequeath and intrust to you my son: give to him the little I possess. Let his mother keep him, but do not permit her to remove him beyond your power to watch them both. She is good and devoted, but very weak. When he is old enough, send him to school. I have not reduced the slender inheritance received from my father. I know that is not enough; but you, my good angel, will do for him what you have done for me. You see now I did right to refuse the superfluities which you wished to procure for me. The money will all be necessary for my child.

"I hoped to have made a little fortune before this, and to have been restoring to you, instead of taking from you still. But life has its accidents,

which one must be always ready to meet. I have, indeed, no misgivings as to the result. Life is for me a duty rather than a pleasure. I go confidently whither I must go. You will receive this letter only in case fortune is against me, unless I should send it to you myself, to show you that, in the hour of danger, my tenderest feelings have been towards you."

He wrote Marguerite a letter still more touching, to forgive her weakness, and express his thanks for the happiness she had given him. "One day of impulse," said he, "ought not to make me forget so many days of courage and devotion, which you have contributed to our common life. Tell Pierre about me, and keep yourself pure for his sake. Do not accuse yourself of my death, for you could not have foreseen the consequences of your weakness. It is to avert them that I am going to fight, — to preserve you and my son forever from the disgrace of certain benefits received. The father exposes himself that the mother may be avenged and respected. My blessings on you both."

He thought, also, of Mme. Feron, and bequeathed her what he could. He dressed, put the two letters in his pocket, and went out before daylight without awakening any one. He went to get, for seconds, his friend the son of the publisher and another trusty friend. At seven o'clock in the morning, he caused the Marquis de Rivonnière to be aroused, and waited for him in his smoking-room.

He had not allowed his two friends to suspect that there was a prospect of an immediate duel. He had an explanation to demand: he wished it to be heard and repeated, if necessary, by tried friends.

In demanding an audience, he sent

up his name. The marquis hastened to dress, and presented himself, almost joyful, at last, to have an opportunity for revenge, and to be able to tell Cesarine that he had been provoked. He even anticipated the explanation, saying to Paul, "You come here, sir, with your witnesses. That is not usual; but you do not know the rules, and it makes no difference to me. I know why you have come. It is not necessary to inform the persons whom I see with you of our affairs. You think you have reason to complain of me. I don't intend to apologize. My day and my hour shall be yours."

"I beg pardon, sir," replied Paul. "I do not suppose I am proceeding according to the rules, and you must accept my way. I want my friends to know why I expose my life and yours. I am not in a position to surround myself with mystery. Those whose good opinion I value know that I have taken for a wife — for a mistress, rather, for I will not speak in parables — a young girl, seduced at fifteen by a man who had no intention whatever of marrying her. I refrain from characterizing the conduct of this man. I did not know him. She had forgotten him. I was not jealous of the past. I was happy, for I was a father; and, whatever might be the tie which would perhaps unite us forever, fidelity promised or voluntarily preserved, I considered our union as my pleasure, my right, my duty. I am poor; I live by my work: she accepted my struggles and my poverty. Yesterday, that man wrote to my companion this letter," — and Paul read aloud the letter of the marquis to Marguerite. Then he showed the ring, and placed it, with the deed, upon the table with the greatest composure; after which, and without permitting the marquis to interrupt him, he added,

"The man who has done me the injury of believing, or at least of writing to my mistress that his presents would decide me to marry her, is you, the Marquis de Rivonnière. I suppose you recognize your signature?"

"Perfectly."

"For this gratuitous insult, you acknowledge, also, that you owe me reparation?"

"Yes, sir: I acknowledge it, and am ready to give it you."

"Ready?"

"I ask but an hour to procure my seconds."

"Very well, sir."

The marquis rang the bell, ordered his horses, finished his toilet, and returned to say to Paul that he begged him and his friends to smoke the marquis's own cigars, while they were waiting. His manners were so courteous and dignified, that, as soon as he was gone, young Latour tried to speak in his favor. He regarded the resentment and the course of Paul very proper, but he thought every thing might have been settled quite otherwise. If Paul had requested the marquis to explain that passage in his letter, perhaps the latter would have denied having intended any injurious imputation. The other friend, more reflective and more severe in his judgment, considered that the attempt to be generous towards Marguerite, and the appeal to her maternal instincts, were as injurious to Paul as the awkward and, perhaps, thoughtless allusion upon which Paul rested his provocation. "I seized upon that allusion," replied Paul, "to be brief, and to settle the grounds of the duel in a precise manner. I think I have made M. de Rivonnière understand that his action has offended me quite as much as his words."

Young Latour yielded the point, but with the hope that the marquis's seconds would assist in bringing about a peaceful settlement.

The latter were not long in appearing. It is probable that the marquis had notified them beforehand, that he expected an "affair of honor" at an early day. The hour had not elapsed, when the six parties were assembled.

M. de Rivonnière had explained every thing to his two friends. They understood his intentions. He retired to his own apartment, and Paul went into another room. The four seconds came to an agreement in ten minutes. Those for Paul maintained his right, which was not discussed. The Viscount de Valbonne, who loved the marquis as well as the point of honor, seemed for a moment to acquiesce in the desire of young Latour, who proposed that the author of the letter be requested to state the precise meaning of a certain phrase; but the other second, M. Campbel, briefly requested him to remember that the marquis had expressed very firmly, in the presence of them both, his intention to explain nothing, and not to retract the meaning of a single word written and signed by his hand.

An hour later, the two adversaries were face to face. Still an hour later, Cesarine received the following note from the confidential servant of the marquis:—

"Monsieur the marquis is mortally wounded. Will Mlle. Dietrich and Mlle. de Nermont refuse to receive his last breath? He yet has power to give me orders to express this his last wish.

"P.S. M. Paul Gilbert is with him, safe and sound.

"DUBOIS."

XVII.

STUNNED as if struck by a cannon-ball, and understanding nothing of all this, we looked at each other without speaking. Cesarine jumped to the bell, called for her carriage, and we set out without exchanging a word.

The marquis was, when we arrived, in the hands of the surgeon, who, assisted by Paul and the Viscount de Valbonne, was extracting the ball. Dubois, who was waiting for us at the door of the house, led us into the drawing-room, where young Latour told us all the circumstances preceding the duel. "I was very uneasy," he said, "because Paul had, for so long a time, been accustomed to practise with the sword and the pistol. He often said to me, 'I shall probably have to kill a man sometime during my life, if he isn't dead already.' I knew that he referred to the former lover of his mistress; for I had been in his confidence from the beginning of the connection. I had already advised him to marry her, on account of the child, whom he loved passionately. That is really the only passion I ever knew him to manifest. So it is for his son, much more than for the mother, that he fought. It had been decided that he should fire first. He aimed quickly and well. He never takes half measures, when he has resolved to act. But when he saw his adversary extended on the ground, and holding out a hand to him, he became a man again, and rushed towards him with open arms. 'You have killed me,' said the wounded man, 'and you have done your duty. You are a gallant man. I am to blame, and I have expiated my fault.' From that moment, Paul has not quitted him. He has forbidden me to notify Marguerite, who suspects nothing and can learn nothing;

but he handed me, conditionally, a letter for you, which he wrote last night. As he has not been obliged to face the fire of his adversary, this letter cannot alarm you. While you are reading it, I will go and get news of the poor marquis. There is no hope at all: perhaps it is all over already."

"I wish to see him!" cried Cesarine.

Dubois, who was near by, going in stupid grief from one door to another, stopped her. "M. Nelaton will not have it," said he: "it is impossible at present. Remain here, and do not go away, Mlle. Dietrich. He said to me, in a whisper, 'To see her, and then die!'"

"Poor man! poor friend," said Cesarine, returning to me choked with sobs. "He dies by my hand! Surely he did not mean to provoke your nephew, for he could not have failed to tell me. He was sincere in wishing to repair the wrong he had done to Marguerite. If he acted clumsily, that was his worst fault. I am to blame, who would have urged him to this reparation which has cost him his life."

"Tell me, Cesarine, was it by chance that he met Marguerite yesterday at your house?"

"What has that to do with it? Are you going to scold me? Am I not already sufficiently unhappy, and sufficiently punished?"

"I desire to know all," I replied firmly. "My nephew might have been wounded, — dying, — at this moment; and I have the right to ask you. Your conscience tells you that you have provoked the disaster. You know all. Confess it! you wished to bring this about to break the tie between Paul and Marguerite."

"To prevent your nephew from marrying her, — yes, I confess that, — to preserve him from a folly, to cause you

to judge the union inadmissible. But who could foresee the consequences of yesterday's meeting? Wasn't it my advice to conceal every thing from M. Gilbert? Did I not give all the reasons which enjoined silence? Could I expect that the marquis would be guilty of such deplorable awkwardness?"

"Then you planned the meeting, and confess it?"

"I know nothing absolutely: I am merely in doubt. The marquis long ago confessed to me a bad action. The name of Marguerite escaped him, and did not go out of my memory. I wished to try, — but read the letter which has been given you, then you will know what to think of the disaster."

I read Paul's letter, and let her read it, hoping that the harshness with which he expressed himself towards her would change her mind about him. It did nothing of the kind. She appeared to pay no attention to what concerned herself, and hotly praised the form, the ideas, and the sentiments of the letter. "He is a man!" she said, wiping her moist eyes. "What a brave heart! what a hero!"

The arrival of Dubois cut short her enthusiasm. The wounded man had borne the operation; M. Nelaton had gone, satisfied with his success; but the doctor would not answer for it that the marquis would live twenty-four hours. M. de Valbonne came in a moment afterwards. "They had to consent to his seeing you," he told us. "He is disturbed because I did not obey the orders given me before the duel. He has his senses; and the doctor knows that it would be wrong to oppose the will of a man who, in a moment perhaps, will have a will no more."

We followed the viscount to the marquis's room. Through the paleness of death he smiled feebly on Cesarine,

and his dull look expressed recognition. Paul, who was seated at the bedside of the dying man, withdrew without appearing to notice Cesarine.

She approached the bed, and kissed the icy forehead of her unhappy slave. The doctor went into another room, leaving the marquis, Cesarine, M. de Valbonne, and myself together. Then, asking us to draw near the bedside, M. de Valbonne spoke to us in a low but distinct voice. "Before the interview between M. Campbell, myself, and the seconds of M. Gilbert, Jacques de Rivonnière said to me, 'I wish no arrangement of the difficulty, for I can assure you that I have had hostile and evil intentions towards M. Gilbert. I had against him not only strong prejudices, but a species of personal hate. The step which he has taken in coming to demand satisfaction, and the manner in which he has done it, convince me that he is a man of courage and of honor, and a good fellow; for never did one resent an injury with more firmness and moderation. No insulting word was exchanged during the interview between us. I felt that he did not deserve my prejudice, and that all the blame was on my side. I do not know but I am to fight with a man who knows how to hold nothing but a pen; but I have a presentiment that he will have luck on his side, so I should be a coward if I drew back a step. You will arrange every thing without discussion; and, if fate is sternly against me, you will make my apologies to M. Paul Gilbert. You will say to him, that, after standing his fire, I should not have returned it, having very particular reasons, which he will understand, to respect his life. You will say these things in my name, if I am killed, or so disabled as not to speak. You will say them to him, in the pres-

ence of his seconds and of all the personal friends who may be assembled around me in my last moments.' Let us hope," added M. de Valbonne, "that that hour has not come, and that Jacques de Rivonnière will live. But I thought it right to fulfil his intentions, that he might rest easy; and I think I see that he approves the exactness with which I have done so."

All of us turned towards the marquis, whose eyes were open, and who made a feeble movement of approval and thanks. We all knew that we ought to leave him to absolute rest; and we left the chamber, whither Paul and the doctor returned. Such was the desire of the marquis, which he expressed by signs.

Cesarine would not quit the house. She wrote to her father to make him acquainted with the unfortunate occurrence; and to beg him to join her. As soon as he arrived, I ran to see Marguerite, to prepare her for what had taken place. Paul had sent me word by young Latour that he wished I would take this duty upon myself, and, at the same time, give Marguerite, as soon as she was re-assured on his account, the letter of pardon and love he had written during the night.

For the first time I saw Marguerite comprehend the grandeur of Paul's character; and, remembering all the sacrifices he had made for her, the truth entered her mind. I concealed from her the gravity of the marquis's condition. I deemed her already sufficiently punished and grieved. Paul's letter brought about this initiation of a child's nature into the real duties of a wife. She made me read it three or four times; then she took it, and, kneeling before me, covered it with kisses, and showered it with tears. I had to stay with her two hours to com-

fort her, to receive her confession, and tell her what she ought to do; for she plied me with questions as to her future conduct. "Tell me all!" she cried. "I ought not to receive letters. I ought to see no one without Paul's knowing it and consenting to it, even if it is Mlle. Dietrich."

"You ought to break off absolutely with Mlle. Dietrich above all, and to-day. Send back her work. I agree to procure for you work as much and as lucrative as hers. Besides, Paul must know that your work is not enough for you. Why conceal it from him?"

"That he may not kill himself with his own work."

"I will not let him kill himself. He will acknowledge that, under certain circumstances, like these, for instance, he ought to let me contribute towards the expenses of his family."

"No: he does not wish it, and he is right. Neither do I wish it any more. It is cowardly for me to be idle while he works so hard. I have accepted his poverty joyfully. The part of honor for me is to be happy as we are. He has indulged me. I am a hundred times happier with him, even in my most anxious moments, than I should be without him. I will listen no more to the complaints of the Feron. If she is no longer contented with us, let her go! I shall be able to do every thing. What does it matter that such a person as I should suffer a little? But tell me why Paul dislikes to have me receive Mlle. Dietrich's gifts. That's something I can't understand, and can't guess!"

I was much tempted to enlighten Marguerite as to the personal risks she ran in accepting the protection of Cesarine. But could one trust to the prudence and discretion of so impul-

sive and wild a creature? Her jealousy awakened might lead to unforeseen complications. She hated, in imagination, the rivals whom her imagination created. On learning the name of the only person who dreamed of disputing with her the possession of her lover, she would not perhaps be able to restrain herself from expressing her anger towards that person. It was necessary to be reticent, and I was so. I remembered that Paul did not wish interference by any one in providing for him and his, since he had refused even me that privilege. Mlle. Dietrich was a stranger: he could not suffer a stranger to enter his house with such a purpose. "Give me the lace," I added, "and the money you have received in advance. I will return them. To-morrow you shall have the new order which I promise. It will pass through my hands, and no one will come here."

She resolutely made the sacrifice which I required. I ought to say indeed that she was really happy and rejoiced at owing nothing to the marquis. She approved the severity of Paul; and if she secretly mourned over any thing, for of course the child would re-appear in her, it was rather the loss of the ring than the vanished acres.

Descending the stairs I met Paul, who was coming home for a moment, promising to return quickly to the marquis. Cesarine had returned home with her father. M. de Rivonnière was no better. Every moment, final dissolution was feared. M. Dietrich would not have his daughter present at such a time.

I found Cesarine very much agitated. Headstrong in carrying out her plans, sometimes in spite of herself, she had arranged to pass an excited

night in company with Paul at the bedside of the dying man. Nothing would turn her from her design; and yet she mourned the marquis sincerely. She owed to him her best care, she said, until his latest breath. She could not be compromised by this solicitude. The friends and relatives, who would surround the wounded man at that time, all knew the purity of her friendship for him, and could not regard it as strange that she should put at their service her activity, presence of mind, and well-known skill in the care of the sick. "And if they do carp at it," she added, "it is in the presence of a duty to be performed which should make one disregard their opinion, at least, unless one is conceited and cowardly. I do not comprehend why my father would not permit me to remain, even if he remained with me, which would have removed every chance for malevolent tongues. Every one knows that he is attached to M. de Rivonnière: no one has heard of their brief quarrel. I shall watch him; and if, as I expect, he returns there, he must take me with him, or I will follow, at whatever hour he may go."

She would have done so, if Dubois had not come to tell us, in the evening, that the condition of the marquis was sensibly improved. He had slept, his pulse was not so weak; and, if there was no return of the fever, he might be saved. Having kept M. de Valbonne and M. Gilbert until eight o'clock, he had begged them to leave him alone with his doctor and the family, which consisted of an aunt, a sister, and a brother-in-law, who had been notified by telegraph, and had already arrived from the country. The doctor had some hope, but only on condition of absolute and prolonged rest. The mar-

quis thanked all who had helped and visited him, but he also felt that he must see no one. Dubois promised us news three times a day, and agreed to let us know if any thing occurred during the night.

The improvement was sustained, but every one said that the cure must be very slow. The lungs had been injured; and the sick man must remain immovable, absolutely mute, guarded from the slightest excitement for several weeks, — months, perhaps.

Cesarine, seeing that fate was determined to oppose to her will, for an indefinite period, one of the chiefest obstacles, resumed her pitiless work, and fell one day unexpectedly upon the family of Paul. He was there, as she knew. She entered resolutely, without being announced. "Now that our sick man is almost saved," she began, addressing Paul, without other preamble than seating herself after pressing Marguerite's hand, "it is permissible for me to think of myself, and to come and find my personal enemy, to have satisfaction for his hatred, or at least to know the reason for it. You are that enemy, M. Gilbert, and your hostility is nothing new to me; but lately it has increased amazingly, and, if you recall the terms of a letter, written to your aunt on the night before the duel, you will understand that I do not accept those words without discussion or explanation."

"If you will permit me to insinuate a single word," replied Paul, with ironical gentleness, "you will agree with me that I ought not to awaken in my companion recollections which are painful to her, and concerning facts of which she ought to speak only to me. You will permit her to go and put the baby in his cradle, while I bear alone the weight of your wrath."

That was precisely what Cesarine desired, and Marguerite had no mistrust. On the contrary, she wished that the beautiful Dietrich, as she called her, would destroy the prejudice of Paul against her, so that she might be able to see her, and love her, without being disobedient.

"Since you render an explanation more easy," said Cesarine, when she was alone with Paul, "it will be more clear and more brief. I know that some inconceivable folly has entered the mind of my dear Pauline; and, probably, she has inoculated you with the same."

"I don't know what you mean, Mlle. Dietrich."

"Indeed! It is convenient for you not to make the confession; but I will spare you the embarrassment of it, for I can bear no longer the horrible suspicion of which I am the victim. Mlle. de Nermont, who is an angel to both of us, is not the less — you must often have perceived it, you must sometimes have suffered by it — an excitable person, uneasy, and troubled by an unhealthy solicitude for those whom she loves. The more she loves them, the more she torments them. She has fretted herself and worried about me almost seven years, desperate at seeing that I loved no one and would not marry. It has made no difference to her, that my father did not share her anxieties in that respect. If I had not had more self-command than she, I should have been really persecuted. As no one is wholly perfect, I have loved, and I do love, my Pauline, notwithstanding her little fault; and even to the present time it has not disturbed my calmness. But, as I have told you, it is getting a little troublesome, and I begin to be wearied by it. This feeling has come all of a sudden, on discover-

ing that she has communicated her silly notions to you. Now, do you understand me?"

"Not in the least."

"I beg your pardon, M. Gilbert. You do understand me; but you want me to tell you, boldly, the cause of my displeasure. That isn't generous on your part. I will tell you, then; although it must appear audacious, in the mouth of a woman speaking to a man who suspects and distrusts her. However, it may be, that, when I shall have spoken, I shall not be the more confused of the two. M. Gilbert, your aunt believes that I have an unhappy passion for you, and you believe it as well."

Paul so little expected this new kind of assault that he was fairly nonplussed. But he recovered himself very quickly, and said, "It seems to me, Mlle. Dietrich, that you plead what is false, to discover what is true. If my aunt had committed the error of which you speak, and which she has caused me to share, I should be ridiculous only in case it aroused my vanity. If, on the contrary, I had been opposed to it and mortified by it, I should only be wise. But do not be alarmed: neither my aunt nor myself has ever believed you actuated by any other passion than of making sport of, and disdaining, men simple enough to desire your notice."

"That is already a confession of the remarks about me in which you indulge here!"

"Here? Leave Marguerite out of the question, in that supposition. You have fascinated her. The poor child is, this moment perhaps, praying Heaven to reconcile us. As for myself, I shall not in any manner deny having been greatly irritated against you; and it is not necessary to suppose in me a stu-

pid fatuity to discover the cause of my irritation. I believe, with my aunt, that you are kind and liberal for the pleasure of being so; but that does not justify you in my eyes for a defect which is to me intolerable,—the desire of serving people in spite of themselves, and of compelling them to be under obligations to you. You have lived in an atmosphere of easy benevolence and interested flattery which has intoxicated you. It is, perhaps, the mistake of a soul carried away by devotion; but when that devotion forces itself upon one, even kindness and good-will become an offence. Ever since my aunt has lived with you, you have endeavored without ceasing to compel me to be indebted to you; and my refusal has surprised you, as if it were an act of revolt. You made me feel this, by your bitter language the only time I ever went to your house; and in that single interview I fathomed you, and judged you better than my aunt has ever been able to do. You tried to persuade me that my pride had caused you great disquiet; you played a little comedy in doubtful taste; and even suffered a little in your own pride, at seeing that I did not take your acting in earnest. You have forgotten that slight vexation of the first interview, I make no doubt; but your queenly caprice never completely leaves you. You wished to force me to prostrate myself like the others, and you have tried to relieve me of my poor companion. You would have succeeded, if I had not been very much on my guard; and, now, I tell you this, Mlle. Dietrich: I will never be indebted to you for any thing; you shall not lighten my labors; you shall not give bread to my child; you shall not be his physician; you shall not possess yourself of my home, my secrets, my confidence,

my affections. I will not conceal my nest upon another bough to guard it from your alms: I will send your gifts back persistently; and, when you bring them in person, I will tell you what I tell you now. If you do not respect others, at least respect yourself, and come no more."

Anyone but Cesarine would have been confounded; but she had been prepared for any thing. She had armed herself for the battle with extraordinary courage. Instead of appearing humiliated, she put on her expression of ingenuous surprise. She was silent for a moment, and made no movement towards departure. "You have just spoken to me very severely," said she, with that marvellous sweetness of voice and look which constituted her most powerful weapon; "but I cannot wish it otherwise, for you have done me a service. I came here in spite and in anger. I shall go away thoughtful and sad. Let us see: is that you have said all true? Am I a child spoiled by the happiness of doing good? Can devotion be in us an element of corruption? They used to say that pride is the virtue of saints. In seeking to sanctify my life by charity, shall I lose modesty and delicacy? It must be, or I should not have wounded you so cruelly. Between the pride which offers and the pride which refuses, is there no mean, which neither of us have known how to keep? It may be possible: I shall think about it, M. Gilbert. I am very glad that you have given me this light. Ah! they never tell the truth to us who are fortunate in our riches. Now I understand that I have exceeded my privilege, in wishing to interest myself in the son of my friend in spite of her. I thought it was personal dislike that actuated her; and, possibly, my vanity has been wounded. Be tran-

quil, hereafter, so far as I am concerned. I will proceed no further without severe self-examination. I will have no more the coquetry of my virtue. I will repress my sympathies. I will learn discretion. Pardon me the anxiety I have caused you, M. Gilbert. Undertake to satisfy Pauline, who needs comfort, since she imagines—oh! upon that last point defend me a little, I beg you. Tell her not to take her dreams for realities. Tell Marguerite that I desire the success of her most cherished wishes, for— You have given me a good and useful lesson, M. Paul; but you ought also to recognize the fact that you may sometimes receive good advice. Here is mine: marry Marguerite, and legitimize your child; you have acquired the right by arms, and your right implies a duty."

"And you, Mlle. Dietrich," replied Paul, "receive also, before we quit each other's presence, a piece of advice as valuable as yours. I know, from the friends of M. de Rivonnière, that you have made him very unhappy. Repair all his wrongs by marrying him, for they hope to save his life."

"I will think about it: thank you, again," she replied, with grace and cordiality. She went out, and closed the door behind her; forbidding Paul to accompany her, with so much ease and such suave dignity that he remained mute with surprise and hesitation. He was not conquered, he was tamed. He thought he need fear her no more, and would not have been sorry to observe her still longer in the new character which she had just taken.

He spoke of her gently to Marguerite; and, without removing the command which he had imposed on her, he allowed her to hope that some time

she might again see "her beautiful Dietrich." He had, perhaps, a certain pleasure in repeating this phrase, since, for the first time, Cesarine, modest and gentle, had seemed to him really beautiful.

XVIII.

THAT day Cesarine had hit the mark. She had purged herself of the ridicule attaching to unrequited love. She had relieved herself of that humiliation which gave too much force to the rebellion of her antagonist. She had diminished his own confidence in himself. Paul now had doubts as to the clearness of my judgment. He thought, perhaps, that I had been a little eager to put him on his guard against an imaginary peril. He was suspicious of my maternal solicitude, and thought he saw in it a certain exaggeration, which was not without danger for himself. Therefore he forbade Marguerite to mention to me Cesarine's visit, so as not to alarm me any further. M. de Rivonnière seemed to be in a state of convalescence, when a serious accident again placed his life in danger. Then it was that Cesarine conceived a most unexpected project, of which she only spoke to me when the thing was practically decided.

"You must know," said she, "that within a fortnight I shall probably be Marchioness de Rivonnière. Dear me! Don't go into hysterics. It isn't very surprising. It is, indeed, a logical consequence of events. Let me tell you what has happened in the last three days.

"M. de Valbonne, who is the best friend of the marquis, came to see me, in his name, and said to me, 'There is no longer any chance for self-deception :

a consultation of the first physicians and surgeons of France has decided this morning that the disease is incurable. Jacques may live three months or longer. This conclusion has been concealed from his family, and revealed only to myself and Dubois, with the advice, that, if the sick man has any business to be transacted, he should be cautiously led to decide what he would do.

"Precautions were needless. Jacques had felt that he had received a mortal wound from the first day, and he had steadily looked his approaching death in the face with stoical courage. At the first words which I ventured to speak to him, he took my hand, and pressed it in a way to signify, "Yes, I am ready;" for you must know, that, by very slight signs and a simple movement of the lips or cheeks, I am able to guess all his wishes, and even to read his thoughts. I asked him if he had any particular wishes. He said *yes* with his fingers, pressing them upon mine, and then with his lips, but without making any sound, "Will — Cesa" —

" "You wish," said I, "to make your will in favor of Cesarine Dietrich?"

"He made a very positive sign of assent. "She has no need of your fortune and will not accept it."

" "Yes: marriage *in extremis*."

"I made him define his resolution, translating it thus: "You think she will accept your name and your title in your last moments?"

" "Yes."

" "No human science can make it certain that the supposed last hour of a sick man may not be the first of returning health. Mlle. Dietrich has not been willing to be your companion in life. Will she run the risk of bind-

ing herself to you, in expectation of an always-uncertain death?"

"I spoke thus to give him a hope he did not wish to entertain, and which I did not have. He looked towards my hat and the door.

" "You wish me to go and ask her at once?" He made an impatient sign of affirmation; and here I am. But, that you may decide how to act in this difficult case, I have brought you the signed opinion of the scientific men. You see that the unhappy man is condemned; and that, in accepting the offer of poor Jacques, you only become his wife in the eyes of the law.'

"I asked M. de Valbonne why Jacques had this singular desire to give me his name. 'As for his fortune,' I added, 'I would not deprive his family of it, being already rich enough myself; and the titles of "my lady," and "marchioness" have not the least attraction to a plebeian girl, who is contented with the position birth has given her.'

" 'You are wrong to disdain the advantages which count for much with the world,' replied the friend of Jacques. 'You love independence, brilliancy, and power. Your actual importance, which is considerable, would be increased tenfold by the position which is offered you.'

" 'It is not of that I should think. It is rather of the good I may be able to do our poor friend. You know all his thoughts. He pretended to me to be insensible to the ridicule to which his position of perpetual suitor subjected him. He deceived me, perhaps?'

" 'He was cruelly sensible of it. The intensity of his suffering shows you the persistency of his passion. I am certain that death would be less bitter, if he had the reparation, which it is in your power to give him, in the eyes of the world.'

" 'In that case I accept.'

" 'That is noble and grand in you! Shall I go and find your father?'

" 'We will go together. I am sure of his consent.'

"We went and spoke to father. He yielded, for reasons other than mine. He believed that my reputation had suffered by the too-apparent assiduity of the marquis, and that my complaisance in allowing it to the exclusion of many other suitors had caused it to be said that I was guarding my independence at the cost of my purity. I cared nothing for that. There is no one whom the calumny of the shallow will not attack. When one is pure, one dances on these mud volcanoes. But my father is tormented by it all. That's the more reason why I should yield. Now, my Pauline, since this is a good action, I ought not to hesitate; isn't that your opinion?"

It was not, altogether, my opinion. I found in this good action something ferocious. Cesarine must tremble at the least manifestation of improvement in her husband. If, contrary to all predictions, he should get well, would she not hate him? and if, without getting well, he should linger for several years, would she not regret the ungrateful task which had been imposed on her?

She was angry at my doubts, and answered me haughtily that I had never known, never esteemed her. "This is the result," she said, "of my dreams, which I did wrong to cherish for the pleasure I had in discussion and in teasing you. You have ended, by persuading yourself that I wished to marry your nephew; and now you believe, that, if I marry another, my soul will be lacerated with regrets. My good Pauline, this romance has excited you: you love romances. But this one

has lasted too long: I am weary of it. If you need facts to re-assure you, I permit you to admit that I have always loved M. de Rivonnière, and that I had the right to make him wait."

As soon as she attempted to annul by a calmly-audacious denial, all that she had said to her father and myself, I had nothing to reply. The banns were published. I informed Paul of it, and he manifested no surprise. He saw M. de Valbonne often: that gentleman had conceived a strong friendship for him, and manifested entire confidence in him. He was, therefore, informed of every thing, and approved Cesarine's course. He told me then of the explanation to which he had come with her, and gave me to understand that I was partly to blame for the ridiculous part he had played towards her. I was so mortified as to be almost angry with myself, — persuaded myself that Cesarine had been only making sport of my terror, when she had only had a passing liking for Paul, and had really, all the time, desired the marquisate of M. de Rivonnière.

So she gained a victory all along the line. No one had any more suspicion of her, — at home, in Paul's house, or in society.

The extreme weakness of the marquis disappeared, during the time consumed in the necessary delays. The illness had taken a new turn. The lung was cured: he was allowed to talk a little, and to pass some hours daily on a couch. The malady took a mysterious character, which baffled science. His blood decomposed. His head was perfectly sound, notwithstanding the continued fever; but dropsy appeared, the stomach acted no more, and his nights were sleepless. He showed much impatience and excitement. No one made any other effort than to guess

what he wanted, and to humor his whims. His relatives had lost hope, and no longer tried to control him.

When the approaching marriage was announced, his sister and his brother-in-law, who had expected the marquis's estate for their children, were angry, and spoke ill of Cesarine. She heard of it, and re-assured them by causing it to be stipulated, in the marriage-contract, that she accepted from the marquis only his name. She would occupy his house only, in case, after his death, it should please her to do so. From that moment, the marquis's family belonged, body and soul, to Mlle. Dietrich. Society was, in a moment, filled with the fame of her merit and her glory.

The night before the signature of this contract, — it was in June, 1863, — there had been another secret contract concluded between Cesarine and the marquis, in presence of M. de Valbonne, M. Dietrich, M. Karl Dietrich, his brother, M. Campbel, and myself; a strange, unprecedented contract, which could have for security only the honor of the marquis, and his respect for his sworn word. On the one hand the marquis, with rare generosity, required that Cesarine should not cease to dwell with her father. He would not have her witness his sufferings and agony. He permitted her only a short daily visit, and a look of affection at the hour of his death. On the other hand, in the improbable event of his getting well, he renounced all right to constrain his wife to live with him, and even the right of seeing her at her own house, if she was not willing. The two clauses were read, approved, and signed. We separated immediately afterwards. The marquis had still enough pride to desire not to be seen long in his weak and dying state.

As he was not in a condition to be

moved, it was decided that the marriage should take place at his house. The mayor of the *arrondissement*, with whom they had good relations, promised to come there in person, and the pastor of the parish made the same promise. This was the only cause of grief to the sister and aunt of the marquis. They had hoped that Cesarine would abjure Protestantism. The marquis had opposed this, with all the energy of which he was capable, to every one who made such a proposition. He had declared that he was neither Protestant nor Catholic, and that he accepted the marriage ceremony which best responded to the religious views of his wife. To tell the truth, Cesarine was as undecided as he; but the Protestant marriage constituted a triumph over a family which she wished to conquer by firmness, and rule by disinterestedness.

Only the most intimate friends, and the nearest relatives, of the parties were invited to the ceremony. The marquis's wish was that Paul and the Viscount de Valbonne should be his witnesses.

We were to meet at noon at Rivonnière's residence. Cesarine arrived a little before the time. She was ravishingly beautiful, in a dress as rich in reality as it was simple in appearance. She retained her usual quiet and charming bearing on grand occasions. She wore, for jewels, only a single row of great pearls as a necklace. Her *fiancé* had sent her, the night before, a magnificent casket of jewels, which she held in her hand. He had not appeared as yet. His physician had required, in order that he might not be too much fatigued, that he should not leave his room until the last moment.

Cesarine went directly to Mme. de Montherme, her future sister-in-law,

who entered the same moment as herself. She gave her the jewel-casket, saying, "Take this while we are here, and hide it. It contains your family diamonds, which I restore to you. You know I want only your friendship."

When Paul entered with M. de Valbonne, I watched Cesarine, and discovered that almost imperceptible contraction of the nostrils which betrayed to me her restrained emotion. She was alone with me in a window-recess. Paul came to salute us. "Now," said she to him with a smile, "your enemy is no more. You have no reason to bear ill-will towards the Marchioness de Rivonnière. Will you give me your hand?" And, when Paul had touched that white-gloved hand, she added, "I give you a good example, and get married. I marry him who has loved me a long time. I know some one to whom you owe more" —

Paul interrupted her. "I see that you are still Mlle. Dietrich," said he; "for you are beginning again to attempt to benefit people in spite of themselves."

"This, then, would be in spite of you? I didn't think you so averse to a good resolution."

"There again, there always, it is Mlle. Dietrich who speaks. But the hour of transformation draws near. The Marchioness de Rivonnière will not be so curious."

"But, if she receives the lessons which are given her with as much sweetness as Mlle. Dietrich, she will be perfect?"

"She will be perfect. No one can doubt that any longer." He bowed to her, and moved away. This short conversation had been held with an appearance of mutual good wishes and good humor. Paul seemed completely

reconciled. He really was so, or desired nothing more. As for her, one might have been satisfied that there was nothing more or less in her heart for him than for an ordinary friend.

Those present, who had not seen the marquis for some time, did not believe that he was so seriously ill. Some of them whispered to their neighbors that he had exaggerated his illness in order to make Mlle. Dietrich pity him, and cause her to consent to a marriage at the point of death, when he was likely to live. These opinions were changed, and hilarity gave place to a sort of shudder, when the marquis appeared, cautiously trundled in by the servants, extended upon a reclining chair. He might have been able to stand for a moment, but at the cost of exposing his dropsical condition; and he could not walk. He was clean shaved and neatly dressed, and the lower part of his body was concealed under a rich drapery. He was fine-looking still; but he was frightfully pale. His pinched nostrils and hollow eyes changed his expression, which had assumed a sort of menacing severity. Cesarine shuddered an instant as she pressed my arm. She had been more interested in him as a sick man. This dress for the ceremony did not become a man nailed to his seat, and gave him a ghostly appearance. M. Dietrich led his daughter to the marquis, who kissed her hand; but it cost him an effort to carry it to his lips. His hands were heavy and half-paralyzed.

The mayor took his place, and proceeded with the accustomed formalities. Cesarine seemed to exercise complete control over her emotions; but, when it was necessary to pronounce the fatal "Yes," she was agitated, and seized with a stammering habit, to which, under great emotion, she was subject.

The mayor, who had given all the usual cautions with deliberate gravity, would proceed no further until she had recovered herself. He had not heard the definitive *yes*; and he must hear it. The bride seemed ill; but she would be allowed a few moments to recover.

"It is not necessary," said she, firmly. "I am not indisposed; but I am excited. I answer *yes*, three times *yes*, if you desire."

What was passing in her mind?

During the short address of the magistrate, M. de Valbonne, from behind the sofa on which Cesarine had dropped, whispered something rapidly in her ear, — something which acted on her like a galvanic battery. She arose as if possessed by angry passion, bound herself irrevocably in a fit of despair, and before the conclusion of the ceremony had recovered her calm demeanor, and her sweetly-tender bearing.

The clergyman proceeded immediately to celebrate the religious marriage, in which some ladies present would only assist by remaining at the other end of the room, and whispering among themselves. Cesarine was displeased by this childish conduct, and begged the pastor to request silence, which he did with moderation but firmness. There was silence, and this time Cesarine's *yes* was heard clearly.

What, then, had M. de Valbonne said to her? Three words only, "*Paul is married!*" It was indeed true. While the newly-married couple were receiving the compliments of those who were present, my nephew came towards me, and said, "My good aunt, you must pardon me once more. I married Marguerite yesterday at the mayor's office. I will tell you why."

He could proceed no further, for Cesarine approached, smiling and almost radiant. "Your hand once more," said she to Paul. "The Marchioness de Rivonnière admires and esteems you. Will you now be her friend, and permit her to go and see your wife?"

"With much pleasure," said Paul, kissing her hand.

"Well," said he, after she had turned to speak to other friends, "you were mistaken, aunt, and so was I, very much, and very unjustly. She is an excellent person, and a woman of heart."

"Tell me about your marriage."

"No, not here. I will go to see you this evening."

"At the Dietrichs'?"

"Why not? Shall you be in your room?"

"Yes, at nine o'clock."

The guests, previously warned by the physician, took their leave. The marquis seemed so weary that M. Dietrich and his daughter felt not a little uneasiness at leaving him. "No," said he to them in a whisper, "you must go in sight of all the people. The arrangement between us requires it. Perhaps I shall call you back in an hour to see me die." And as Cesarine shuddered, "Do not pity me," he added, so that she alone heard: "I shall die proud and happy, fully convinced that it would be harder for me to live."

"That is a speech more cruel than death itself," said Cesarine. "You suspect me always" —

He, speaking more softly still, interrupted her. "You will be free to-morrow, Cesarine. Do not tell a lie to-day."

Thus they parted; and, when evening was come, he did not die. He was sleeping; and Dubois came to tell us not to be at all uneasy on his account,

for he was no worse than in the morning. "Only," added Dubois, "in order to give pleasure to his sister, he has received the sacraments of the church."

"What do you say?" cried Cesarine. "You are mistaken, Dubois."

"No, Madame la Marquise, my master is philosophical: he believes in nothing. But his position has its duties. He did not wish, that, on account of his marriage, he should be supposed a Protestant; and he has caused M. de Valbonne to send to the newspapers the information that he has conformed to the requirements of religion."

"It is well, Dubois: please to tell him that he has done well."

"What a contradictory and inconsistent man!" she said to me, as soon as Dubois had gone. "This atheistic superstition would fill me with prejudice against him, if he had not, at this moment, a title to absolution by his friends rather than at the hands of a priest. He does not know what he is doing."

"Good heavens! how you hate him, my poor child! He will do well to die quickly."

"Why? He may live now as long as he pleases. I am no more capable of love or hate. Every thing is of no consequence to me. Do not suppose I regret the step I have taken. You know very well that he has obtained neither my heart nor my person. If, contrary to all expectation, the marquis should recover his health, I would belong to him no more than in the past."

"Will he have sufficient control over his passions to keep his word towards you?"

"The promise he has signed is worth more than you think. It will assist me in getting a legal separation."

"Have you already taken legal advice?"

"Certainly."

We exchanged not a word about Paul. She received the visits of her friends; and I went to my own room to pass the rest of the evening with my nephew, who was awaiting me.

"Listen now," said he, "to what has happened, which I have kept from you more than a fortnight. It is well to state the terms on which I found myself with M. de Rivonnière after the duel. He had accused me in his own mind, and probably, also, to his friends, of aspiring to the hand of Mlle. Dietrich. Seeing me defend my honor, in the name of my mistress and my child, he repented of his injustice, and esteemed me so much the more when he saw in me no longer a rival. Nevertheless, he had still a little uneasiness in regard to the future; for he thought of the future during the few days he seemed to be getting better. He sent M. de Valbonne to say to me, 'You have almost killed my best friend. You are very sorry, I know, and would gladly restore him to life. Perhaps you can. The woman whom he loves passionately loves another. Rightly or wrongly, he imagines you to be that person. If you were married, she would forget you. Do you not intend to marry her whose part and cause you have so loyally and energetically taken?' I replied that the fancy of Mlle. Dietrich always seemed to me a bad joke, repeated in good faith by persons in whom the marquis was wrong to place confidence.

"But if these persons have not been deceived?" resumed M. de Valbonne.

"I should still have but one word in reply. I am not in love with Mlle. Dietrich, and am not ambitious."

"That simple answer, coming from you, is sufficient for us," replied the marquis. "Now will you permit us to express to you some solicitude in regard to Marguerite?"

"Now that all injuries are so bloodily expiated, I allow all questions. I have always intended to marry Marguerite as soon as I had avenged her. I therefore mean to marry her as soon as I have induced Mlle. de Nermont, my aunt and adopted mother, to consent to the union. She is already partially prepared, but not fully. In a few days, probably, she will give her consent."

"The marquis believes, however, that she will not yield so easily, on account of Marguerite's family."

"Yes, on account of Marguerite's mother, an infamous wretch. But that mother is dead. I received the news this morning; and the principal objection in my aunt's eyes and my own is removed."

"Then," replied the viscount, "do what your conscience dictates. You are in the presence of a man whom you have placed between life and death, whom anxiety and uneasiness cause more injury than his wound, and who might have a chance to live if he were assured of two things, both depending upon your course: reparation given, and her future secured, to the woman whose treatment by himself occasions him deep remorse; liberty, reason, restored to the troubled mind of the woman he loves, notwithstanding the injury she has done him. Do not answer; reflect."

"I reflected. I said to myself that I need consult no one, not even you, before doing my duty. I wrote to M. de Valbonne, the next day, that the banns had been published at the mayor's office. He hastened to my office,

embraced me, and begged me to leave Cesarine in ignorance of what had been done. In order to do so, it must be kept from you, my good aunt; for Mlle. Dietrich is curious, and takes you unawares. Now, pardon me, approve what I have done, and tell me that you love me still; for this is not a sudden step I have taken: it is a sacrifice to the dignity and peace of mind of others,—of my child first. You know that I have never allowed myself to be governed by passion, and that I have no passion for Marguerite. It is, also, a sacrifice for the sake of a man whom I should have done right to kill, but whom I am not the less unhappy at having killed; for he will not recover, I am sure, and his wife will very shortly be a widow. Finally, it is a sacrifice to the dignity of Mlle. Dietrich. Her pretended liking for me, of which I have always made sport, was, nevertheless, a settled conviction in the mind of M. de Rivonnière, thanks to his imprudence in confiding his jealousy to others than M. de Valbonne. If I were not married, it would certainly be said that the beautiful marchioness was waiting for her widowhood to marry me. False rumors travel quickly, and the truth follows slowly. I have been very cruel to that poor lady, whom I ought to have pardoned a momentary coquetry, followed by childish endeavors to relieve my wants. All this is forever effaced by the double marriage. I have discovered that your ward has real merits, which are a counterpoise to her defects. I suppose she has abandoned forever her intention of benefiting me. She will find so many others, who will yield to her benevolence with good grace! Besides, I am no longer an interesting object to her. My employer has just

made me partner in a certain branch of the business, which was worth nothing, and which I have made valuable. My income is, therefore, altogether sufficient for the necessities of my little family. Marguerite is happy, the Feron repentant and pardoned; little Pierre has recovered his appetite, and has two teeth already. Kiss me, aunty; tell me that you are satisfied with me, as I am with myself."

I kissed him, and told him I approved his conduct; concealing from him the secret sorrow that his marriage with a girl so little adapted to him, however devoted she might be, had caused me. I concealed from him, equally, the pleasure which I experienced in seeing him delivered from the misfortune of Cesarine's liking. He would no longer believe that there was any danger in the past. I believed him preserved from it in the future. We were both mistaken.

The next day a very marked improvement manifested itself in the condition of the marquis; and his sister did not fail to attribute the miracle to the power of the priest. Cesarine and her father saw him for a moment, as had been agreed. He refused to allow them to prolong their short interview; after which he called M. de Valbonne to him, and laid before him the condition of his mind. "I think, I feel," said he, "that I shall live; but my recovery will be slow, and I do not wish to be an object of terror and disgust to my wife. I would rather only see her when I have completely recovered my health. To that end, it is best that she should go and pass the summer in the country."

"Are you still jealous?"

"No, that is all over. Cesarine is too proud to dream of a married man; and that man is too honorable to be-

tray me. I am certain that she will love me, if I am not a ghost of frightful appearance, whatever pains she may take to conceal her love. She would not leave Paris, if I should remain. People would blame her. It is, therefore, necessary that I should go myself. I must go for a year, at least. They must advise me to travel. Tell the doctor I wish it. He will make the objection that I am still too weak. Reply to him, that I am resolved to risk all, for all."

The doctor thought the idea of his patient a good one. The sight of his wife threw him into dangerous excitement; while absence from her, a change of air and of circumstances, alone could save him. To move him, however, seemed impossible; and, if undertaken at once, he would answer for nothing.

M. de Valbonne was full of energy, and regarded irresolution as the sole cause of all non-success in life. He insisted; and the removal was resolved upon. The decision was announced forthwith to Cesarine, who offered to accompany her husband. He refused; and poor Rivonnière, bundled up in a bed in a wagon, departed for Aix-les-Bains early in July. From thence he would, in case of improvement, proceed further. To travel to health, or to death, was his idea. M. de Valbonne accompanied him, with a special physician.

Cesarine remained a few days longer in Paris. Her father was impatient to return to Mireval; but she compelled him to wait. Before withdrawing from society for six months, it was necessary for him to explain to every one, in a few words at least, that situation which seemed so strange, and made so much talk. At bottom she found, in the midst of secret cha-

grin, some childish pleasure in her position of marchioness, and in showing to the aristocracy of birth that she had honored instead of disfigured it, by entering the ranks of the nobility. She put on an air of resigned and courageous widowhood, which became her very well. She had, she said, but very little hope of preserving her husband; she had done all she could to preserve his life. It was not a caprice of her generosity, — an act dictated by momentary compassion. She had always considered and treated him as her best friend. She had always said, that, if she determined to marry, it should be him alone. There was nothing astonishing, in her having accepted his name; but she had accepted nothing else, and she wished it to be plainly understood. She repeated this discourse, in every possible form, to several hundred persons, at least, in the space of a week; and, when she saw that the report had gained sufficient currency, she remarked to me, "There, I can do no more. All Europe knows why I am Marchioness de Rivonnière. I alone do not know."

I understood the hint; but I pretended not. I knew very well why she had consented to the marriage. She did not reckon on Paul's marriage: she wished to re-assure him, and lead him on by her confidence and friendship. She had calculated that six months, at most, would be sufficient for her purposes. She had made every arrangement to estrange Paul and Marguerite, while pretending to attach the latter to herself. Paul had hated the woman who offered herself: he would fall in love with her who held aloof, so as to give the advantage to another. She had succeeded in destroying his prejudice, but not in preventing his marriage; and she had no alternative

but to appear charmed at the price at which she had obtained this result.

But how cruel was that price, and how she cursed it under her pretence of royal firmness! I admired the force of her character; for I alone could surprise her, in moments of despair, weeping secret tears. Her father suspected nothing. He could prevent nothing, amend nothing. It was henceforth useless to say any thing to him. The rest of the family rejoiced at the high position acquired by Cesarine; and Helmina gave twenty needless orders every day to have the pleasure of saying, "Let madame la marquise know!" Her young Dietrich cousins shared this vanity to some extent. The elder was married, the younger betrothed; while little Irma would say, "My sisters marry commoners; and they are furious because they must. As for me, I will have a nobleman, or I won't marry."

Bertrand said absolutely nothing. He knew the people too well. But when Cesarine, after declaring that she was hungry, pushed away her plate without eating a mouthful; or when, after having given orders for her carriage, sent word, with a spiritless air, that the horses should be unharnessed, he looked at me, and his cold eyes said, "You should have done her will: she will die for having done the will of others."

XIX.

WE left Paris at last on the 15th of July, without Cesarine's having seen either Paul or Marguerite. Mireval was, by the elegant comfort of the château, the beauty of the lakes and the shades, a place of delight;

and it was but a few hours distant from Paris. M. Dietrich expended large sums to improve its productiveness, — in fact, much more than he received from it; and he made these sacrifices purely for the love of science, and the benefit of the inhabitants. He was really the benefactor of the region; and yet, if the charm and the skill of his daughter had been lacking to him, he would not have been liked. His excessive modesty, his absolute indifference to all personal ambition, imprinted upon his language and his manners a cold dignity, which might be taken by prejudiced persons for the stiffness of pride. He had been at first disliked as much through fear as through jealousy; and, since his scrupulous integrity had secured him respect, his devotion to the interests of the community had brought him esteem. But he lacked affability, and was not in the least in sympathy with the common people. He did not desire to be. Seeking no reward whatever, he found one in the success of his efforts to combat ignorance and prejudice. He was indeed a worthy man, of practical and real merit. His lack of popularity was the best proof of it.

Cesarine, however, was disturbed at seeing commonplace and selfish notabilities preferred to him. She had urged him very strongly to become a candidate for deputy, which he opposed, saying that certain victories were worth all the efforts of a serious mind, but that triumphs of ambition were scanty and vain.

Nevertheless, a local question of great interest to the welfare of the farmers of the department presenting itself about this time, he allowed himself to be conquered by the duty of combating evil; and, at the risk of

defeat, he permitted himself to be proposed. Cesarine undertook to supply the burning zeal which he lacked. She needed, perhaps, a contest to distract herself from her own secret cares. Her marriage gave her the right to engage in it with a much more pronounced activity; and M. Dietrich, who for a long time had resisted her omnipotence only through the fear of the world's opinion, abandoned thenceforth to the Marchioness de Rivonnière the government of the house and of the family, — a subordination which he had endeavored to render less apparent when it was in the hands of Mlle. Cesarine. The numerous tenants upon the estate of the marquis, who had much reason to praise the indulgent policy of his agent, were filled with fear on learning of the marriage, and the absence, for an indefinite period, of their landlord. They were afraid of falling under the supervision of M. Dietrich, and of having to give an account for very many abuses. When they learned and saw that Cesarine pretended to no authority, that she would not even visit the farm and château of her husband, there was a great outburst of gratitude and joy. From that moment she could dispose of their votes as of her own tenants'.

Mireval had been theretofore a solitude. M. Dietrich had reserved that corner of the earth for himself, to be free from the noise of the world. Cesarine, respecting his wishes, had appeared to appreciate on her own account the useful and salutary leisure of the season of annual seclusion. Now she declared that it was necessary to sacrifice it, and open all the doors to the throng of voters, of every rank and opinion. M. Dietrich agreed with a sigh, and the young marchioness organized a series of incessant receptions.

I had liked Mireval very much. I liked it no longer when I saw it converted into a place for show and noise. In every collection of humanity mediocrity rules. Those daily dinners with covers laid for fifty, those meetings in the park, that perpetual merry-making, were odious to me. I could not refuse to aid Mlle. Helmina in her housekeeping duties. Her activity was no longer all-sufficient. The marquisate which had fallen to her niece turned her head: she could now find nothing magnificent or ingenious enough to sustain the lustre of a position so exalted. I was no longer on terms of intimacy with Cesarine. Since her marriage and Paul's, her lips were sealed; nothing could be inferred from her manner. She was not well, which was the only indication I could find of a great deception courageously borne out. I ought to say, that, during this period of efforts to forget her wound or to conceal it, she was really the strong woman which she made it a matter of pride to be; and that while admiring her I felt my tender feelings towards her revive, as well as the grief which her own suffering caused me, and the devotion which inclined me to alleviate it by sacrificing to her my own wishes and my own freedom.

I hardly had time to write to Paul, and he wrote very seldom to me. His work had increased since the change in his position. His wife was happy, his child was in good health. He had nothing, he said, to complain of. M. de Valbonne wrote to M. Dietrich once a week to inform him of the alternate improvements and relapses in the condition of M. de Rivonnière. He bore transportation better than rest, and was going all over Switzerland by short journeys. Cesarine

appeared to take much interest in these letters, but M. Dietrich alone replied to them. The marchioness could hardly conceal the intense aversion which M. de Valbonne had inspired in her.

After a contest of two months, Cesarine triumphed, and her father was elected by a large majority. She had brought to bear a ceaseless activity and a delicate skill, which were the theme of universal admiration. A few days of this triumph did not intoxicate M. Dietrich, but began to undeceive the marchioness; for very many of those whom she had defeated with so much difficulty showed that they were not worth the trouble, and that they had hardly more heart than votes. Then she began to feel very weary and very much depressed. M. Dietrich, who had never seen her sick since her childhood, was frightened, and carried her off to Paris for medical advice.

We returned, therefore, to the house in town to find it very quiet and secluded; for all fashionable Paris was in the country or at the sea-side. We arrived in mid-September, and it was still very hot. The marquis was decidedly better. Cesarine saw the time of her deliverance rapidly receding; but she seemed altogether resigned to her lot, and her father hoped that she would yet have some happiness in her domestic relations. The engagement which his son-in-law had entered into, never to claim her as his wife, seemed to the father an act of delicacy from which the marchioness would release him, on seeing him completely restored, and still loving her.

The consultation of the physicians dissipated our fears. The only trouble with Cesarine was the temporary exhaustion caused by her great exertions.

She was advised to pass the rest of the summer reclining on a couch in a darkened room, riding out a little before sunset, to take iron and quinine, and to retire early. She submitted with indifference, caused large numbers of books to be brought to her, and plunged into them, as a person abstracted from all outward happenings. Then she took notes, made little heaps of her manuscript, and, one day said to me, "You do not know what I have been doing in these days of leisure and reflection. I have written a book! It is not a romance: don't be too much elated with the prospect of reading it. It is a heavy and tedious resumé of some philosophical theories of the day. It is good for nothing, but it has occupied and interested me. To read much, and to write a little, is an outlet for the activity of my mind. But in order that it may really do me good, I ought to know whether it has been worth the trouble of writing it, and is worthy of being read. I have written to your nephew to pray him to give me his opinion; and I have sent him my manuscript, as it is his business to judge of this sort of thing. I don't expect it to be printed: I only intend to find out if I can go on without throwing away my time."

"And he has answered" —

"Nothing: only that he has examined my work; that he has not time to write a criticism of it in the form of a letter, but that he can do much better in fifteen minutes of conversation; and that he holds himself subject to my commands on the day and hour I shall fix."

"And you have fixed" —

"To-day. I am expecting him now."

As usual, Cesarine had notified me

at the last moment. Any reflection about it was out of the question. It was two o'clock, and Paul was very punctual.

I watched the marchioness, in vain, when he entered. She betrayed no emotion whatever. She did not even reproach him for not having kept his promise of calling upon her. She did not excuse herself for not keeping hers to visit Marguerite. He spoke only of literature and philosophy, as if they were resuming an interview interrupted by a separation. As for him, calm as a judge who does not permit personal feelings of any kind to interfere with the discharge of his duties, he thus gave his judgment on her book: "You have done, without seeming to be aware of it, a remarkable work, but not without its faults. On the contrary, the faults are numerous. However, as there is one essential quality, — independence in the point of view and an appreciation more than ingenious; an appreciation, very profound, of the question you have treated, — I seriously advise you to strike out the rather puerile details, and bring to light the entire structure of your thoughts. The examination of effects is done with the hand of a scholastic, and takes infinitely too much room. The judgment of causes is masterly, and you have passed that over with too much modesty and self-distrust. Do your work over again; sacrifice three-quarters of it, and make an entire book of the last quarter. I answer for it, that it will deserve to be published, and that it will not be useless. As for style, it is correct and clear, though a little timid. I should wish it to have the energy, cold, if you will, but powerful, of a conviction which you cherish."

"I cherish no conviction," replied

Cesarine. "I have done this work with complete independence."

"Independence," said he, "is a passion, and deserves to take a place among the noblest passions. It is, indeed, the ruling passion in the most exalted minds of our time. It is, in a new form, the passion of liberty of conscience, which has excited the greatest contests in which your Protestant fathers engaged, madame."

"You are right," said she. "You open the window, and let the light penetrate within me. I thank you: I will follow your advice. I shall rewrite my book, and you shall see that I understand you."

He was going to withdraw, but she retained him. "You would like, perhaps, to chat with your aunt. I have something to do in the house. If I do not see you again here, thank you, and good-by." She held out her hand to him with cordial grace, adding, "I have not asked you for news of your family, for I have it from Pauline. She will tell that I inquire often."

It was useless to tell Paul that she never inquired. It was no longer for me to warn him of dangers, of which I thought it my duty to advise him the year before. I must, on the contrary, let him believe that they were imaginary, and be contented with the ridicule which that misapprehension cost me. I only thought it my duty to inquire if he did not fear to awaken the jealousy of the marquis by coming to see his wife.

"I am so far from wishing to inspire him with jealousy," he replied, "that I had not even thought of him. But, if you fear any thing of the sort, I can easily refrain from coming any more, and can make you the medium of communications which must take place be-

tween myself and Mme. de Rivonnière in reference to her book."

"Perhaps it would be well to write to M. de Valbonne, and consult him."

"That would be childish. To place myself in the position of a formidable rival, when I am already married, would seem to me both ridiculous, and extremely insulting to the poor marchioness, whom you judge so severely. Suppose, my dear aunt, you are not mistaken, and that she has really had, in some extravagant dream, an idea of becoming Mme. Gilbert. She is certainly very contented, at present, in the enjoyment of a position much better suited to her tastes and habits. Must a childish fancy be forever treasured against her? If you should dig up the past of all women, wouldn't you find thousands of peccadillos, as unreasonable as they are innocent? Really now, aunt, you should allow me to forget every thing, and render justice to the good and intelligent woman, who redresses, by serious work and artless charms, the lightnesses and follies of the girl she was."

Must I insist? Must I warn M. Dietrich, absent on a six-weeks' journey? Must I disturb Marguerite, and tell her to be on her guard? Evidently, I could, and should, do nothing: I had long ago lost hope in endeavoring to guide Cesarine. I was no longer her governess. She was free, and I had no commission from her husband to keep watch over her. There was no indication that he was in a state to obtain vengeance from a rival; and, besides, Paul had sufficient control over him to destroy all suspicions. Then, perhaps, Paul could see more clearly than I. Cesarine, deep in her serious studies, and, it might be, ambitious of fame, perhaps thought no more of him.

He came again several times, and,

little by little, they began to see each other frequently. M. Dietrich came back, to find them on relations so discreetly and quietly courteous and friendly, that he did not have the least uneasiness, and did not even think it necessary to inform M. de Valbonne, in his letters. Autumn came, and he proposed to his daughter that she should travel with him for a short time; but she was completely cured, and found in Paris the seclusion necessary for her work. She seemed so calm and happy, that he consented to stay in Paris until the opening of the parliamentary session. Cesarine no longer loved society, and she lived quietly from choice. Her train of suitors had naturally abandoned her. She sought out among her old friends thoughtful persons, occupied with science and politics. Not a fine young man, not a fashionable woman, appeared at the Dietrich house. Paul, with his modest ways and serious conduct, was well suited to attend this areopagus of mature people, assembled around the literary and philosophical works of the beautiful marchioness. He took pleasure in the interesting discussions which Cesarine knew so well how to excite and carry on. He appeared very well, when compelled to participate in them. He had already gained several intimate friends in this society. They made much of him; and the more, the oftener they saw him, and the less restrained he was by his natural diffidence. Cesarine succeeded in making him brilliant in spite of himself, and without his discovering the assistance she gave him.

By the end of the winter, their friendship fully established without any sort of crisis or emotion, she requested him to bring Marguerite to see her. He refused, but told her why.

Marguerite was very impressionable, and too little protected, by experience and reason, to leave the sphere where she was both discreet and happy.

In the spring, Paul, whose circumstances were steadily improving, was able to rent, at a distance of only a few miles from Paris, a little country-house, where his wife and child lived with Mme. Feron, without their being forced to work very hard. He went home every evening, and in the morning, before going to business, watered a little clump of plants, which he had the pleasure of seeing grow and blossom. He had never had any other ambition than to own a little spot of ground; and he intended to buy, next year, that which he had rented. He could now leave the office at five o'clock; and he dined in Paris, and afterwards often came to see us. As soon as the clock struck nine, however interesting the conversation might be, he left us to take the last train, and rejoin his family. Sometimes he accepted an invitation to dine with us, and a few notabilities who surrounded the marchioness.

One day, when we were expecting him, I received a note from him. "I am alarmed," he wrote: "Marguerite has sent word that Pierre is very sick. I am going home. Excuse me to Mme. de Rivonnière."

"Take my carriage, and go to my doctor," said Cesarine, "and convey him to your nephew's house. I would go with you if I were at liberty; but I give you Bertrand, who will go to the apothecary's and bring whatever is wanted."

I hastened away. I found the poor child very ill, Paul in despair, and Marguerite almost beside herself. The neighborhood doctor, who had been called in, consulted with the one I had brought. The boy, who had been care-

lessly vaccinated, had the small-pox. They prescribed the usual remedies, and withdrew, without giving great reason to hope; for the malady had taken a virulent form. We were standing in consternation about the bed of the little sufferer, when Cesarine entered about ten o'clock in the evening, still clothed as she had been in the drawing-room at home, charmingly beautiful, and bringing hope in her very smile. She installed herself among us; then she required Paul and Marguerite to leave us two to watch by the bedside of the sick. The room was so small, that it was necessary not to crowd it too much, on account of the bad air. She undressed, put on a dressing-gown, which she had brought in a handkerchief, stationed herself beside the little bed, and remained there all night, all the next day, and all the nights and days which followed, until the little one was out of danger. She was truly admirable in her conduct; and Paul was, like all the rest, compelled to accept her authority blindly. She was used to the care of the sick at Mireval; and she brought to the task rare physical and moral courage. The peasants believed her gifted with magical powers; for she worked the miracle of reanimating the will and of infusing hope. This miracle she worked for us all, who assembled about the poor child. She had entered into this family, which was cast down with grief and terror, like a ray of sunlight at midnight. She had given us all presence of mind, knowledge of what ought to be done, confidence in the conquest of the illness, — all essential conditions for the success of the best remedies. When she went, she left us joyful, and blessing her providential intervention.

I had to remain some days yet to take care of Marguerite, whom anxiety and

sorrow had made sick also. Cesarine returned to see her, revived her sinking spirits, manifested an interest in her of which she was very proud, re-assured Paul and made him light-hearted, and made Mme. Feron fall in love with her by chatting with her of the commonest things, in language so simple that the superior woman put herself absolutely in the background, so as to come down to the level of the humblest. This charming seductiveness captivated me as well; for, in our conversations, she no more gave a confidential lie to her outward conduct. I persuaded myself that she was completely cured of her pride and passion. I feared no more to excite Paul by sharing the admiration which he had for her. Gratitude to her and affection for her became sacred things: a forecast of danger would have seemed to me an insult to both of them.

So the marchioness had succeeded where Cesarine had failed. She had ameliorated the condition of Paul; for, without a suspicion of it on his part, she had exercised an influence on the plans of M. Latour, through the medium of her father. The latter, having met with some losses, had desired to curtail operations. By lending him a considerable sum of money, M. Dietrich had led him to take quite the opposite course, and to intrust Paul with more important business. She had thus given bread to the child, and rest to the mother; and she had been the nurse of both. She had possessed herself of the confidence, the affection, even the secrets, of the family. All that Paul had sworn to remove out of the reach of her solicitude, she had seized upon; and, so far from complaining of it, he was happy that she had conquered.

One person only, she who up to that

time had been the most trusting, Marguerite, with no other light than her own instinct, guessed, or rather felt, the fatality which was enveloping her. She felt it so much the more keenly that she adored the beautiful marchioness, and could accuse her of nothing. Her jealousy burned after a fashion quite the contrary to what we should have anticipated. One day, I found her in tears; and, although it was a wearisome task to listen to her complaints, I was forced to do so. "Don't you see," said she, "you think me happy? Well, I am less so than before my marriage, for which I longed so much. I have learned a little, Paul has a little more time to devote to me, and he thinks he is doing me great good by teaching me. But it kills me: for, you see, I have learned a heap of things which I did not suspect before; and every thing is sad, and every thing hurts my feelings, and condemns me. He cannot speak to me of what is good or evil, without my remembering the evil I have done, and the repugnance he must have for my past life. He tells me I ought to forget it, for all has been repaired; but who has repaired it? He, at the risk of his life, by taking the life of another, and by restoring me my honor at the price of blood. He is good: he begins to pity him whom he detested, and pity for his enemy makes him sorrowful whenever he hears that his enemy will die. If he only loved me enough to find consolation in that! But that can never be. It is not every thing to be a pretty woman, and to love folly: one should also have understanding and knowledge, in order not to be a bore to one who has so much of both. When I wanted to be married, I did not know that. I thought he must be delighted with me and his child; and I always said to

him, 'Where will you be better loved and more happy than with us?' He never contradicted me, but would say, 'You can see very well that I am not happier elsewhere; for I never leave you except when compelled.' But now, though he might dine with us every day, it is very seldom that he comes home before half-past nine at night. He never sees Pierre put to sleep. He looks at him, indeed, in his little crib, and, in the morning, carries him into the garden, and eats him up with kisses. But I watch Paul through my window-curtain, and see that he is in low spirits. I even fancy, sometimes, that there are tears in his eyes. If I should try to question him, he would always answer with the same gentleness, and chide me with the same kindness as ever; but he seems severe in spite of himself, and I see how hard it is for him to refrain from telling me that I am ungrateful. Then I ask his pardon, and say nothing more to him. I am too much afraid of tormenting him; but it still remains a weight on my heart. I sing, I laugh, I bustle about, to distract myself. That succeeds as long as the child is awake, and I am occupied with him; but, when he shuts his blue eyes, heaven is shut out. Then Mme. Feron goes to sleep too. Paul has forbidden me to take her into my confidence; and she loves to talk, and my silence wearies her. I remain alone, and wait until my husband comes home. I take my work, and say to myself, 'Two hours isn't so very long.' But it seems to me two years. I don't know why these two hours, which he could give us but doesn't, make me foolish, unjust, wicked. I dream of misfortune and despair. If I didn't fear to wake up the little one, I should cry out, I suffer so much. I look at the window as if I

could see, through it, what Paul is doing at Paris; and yet I know very well he is doing nothing wrong: he can't do any thing but what is right. I know that he goes often to see you; and it's very natural he should, — you are just the same as his mother. When he comes back, I always ask him if he has seen you. He says yes; for he never tells a lie. Then if he has seen the beautiful marchioness, if she had many people at her house, if he is glad to get back to me; and he laughs, and says yes. He makes me tell him every thing the little dear has done all day, how he has amused himself, what he has eaten and drunk: indeed, he seems so happy in talking about, baby that I don't dare to speak about myself. I don't say a word about my misery. Sometimes I am very pale and dragged out; but he doesn't notice it, or, if he does, never knows why. I would like to tell him every thing, and confess to him that I am tired of life, and am sometimes sorry that he prevented me from taking it. But I am afraid of causing him pain, of adding to the troubles he has; for he has much to try him, I am sure, — perhaps he is more to be pitied than I am."

That day Marguerite did not let me suspect that she had any jealousy of the marchioness; but another time, it was to Cesarine herself that she opened her heart.



XX.

SOME weeks had passed since Pierre's sickness. Cesarine went to see him every Sunday, and so passed with Paul and myself a part of that day which Paul had always consecrated entire to his family. During the week, he was accustomed to dine at the Die-

trichs' on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and to go there to pass an hour almost every evening. This was a great cause of sorrow to Marguerite; but I thought it unjust in her to regard it in that light. I had not spoken to Paul about it; hoping he would take the wise part, and be unwilling to enchain himself so closely. He was already slave enough to his duty. Was a little of the pleasure of society not to be permitted to a man of intelligence, condemned to the companionship of so illiterate a woman?

However, I began to be distressed by his troubled look, and the low spirits in which I often found him. The marchioness herself perceived the same things; and, if she did not speak of them, it was because she knew too well that she was herself the cause. Marguerite longed to be questioned. Like all children, she did not know what to do unless people interested themselves in her. To speak of herself, to complain, to dilate, to boast by self-accusation, to ask judgment, to repent, to promise, and to begin it all over again, such was her habit; and since the Feron was no longer in her confidence, and since Paul, married to her, had inspired her with a sort of fear, she was damming up the gathering floods in her heart, that must break forth at last.

As we were all three in the little garden, Paul being busy outside, she broke through the slight barrier which our absence of curiosity had formed. "Paul was very much amused at your house last evening, I suppose," said she in a bitter tone; "for he missed the train, and only got back home, by walking all the way, at eleven o'clock."

"Really!" said Cesarine. "Were you frightened?"

"Very much. A man alone like that on the road, where one meets only

people who are roaming about for no one knows what! You ought to send him away sooner. When he doesn't come home at the regular time, I count the minutes. It worries me very much."

"Dear child," replied Cesarine, with wonderful gentleness, "we will see that it doesn't happen again. We will scold Bertrand when the clocks are slow."

"You ought to put them ahead an hour; for he amuses himself so well at your house, that he forgets me."

"Nobody gets any *amusement* at our house, Marguerite. On the contrary, we are very serious."

"Yes; but that's his way of amusing himself. But you wouldn't try to make me believe that you don't have lots of pretty ladies there?"

"Oh, you are mistaken! Pretty ladies don't come there any more."

"You are there always; and you are worth a hundred."

"Thank you; but you can't be jealous of *me*?"

Marguerite looked the marchioness in the face with a sort of terror; then she bent before the clear and deep eyes which questioned her. She fell at Cesarine's feet, took her hands and kissed them. "My beautiful marchioness," said she, "you know that you are my good angel upon earth. You brought about my marriage; for I am sure I owe that to you. I owe you the life of my child, and his good looks too; for without you he would have been disfigured. When I think what pains you took with him, without being disgusted with that horrible disease, without fear of taking it, without permitting me to come near it, without caring for yourself a bit, so as to be able to care for others! Yes, indeed, you are the guardian angel; and I shall never be able to tell you how much I love you. But

all that doesn't prevent me from being jealous of you. Could I be otherwise? You have every thing, and I have nothing. You are as beautiful as when you were sixteen; and I, younger than you, am already faded. I feel that I am bent over like an old woman, while you are as straight as a poplar in spring. You have, to render you still more pretty, all kinds of fine dresses, which would be of no use to me. If I had them, I should not know how to wear them. When I put a little end of ribbon in my hair so as to make it look nice, Paul takes it off, saying, 'That doesn't look well: you are more beautiful with your hair loose.' But my hair is coming out. See! I have lost more than half of it now; and when a little more of it is gone, if I buy a chignon, Paul will laugh at me. He will say, 'Remain as you are. It isn't your hair I like, it is your heart.' That's very pretty; and it's true, it's too true. He likes my heart, and he doesn't care any thing for my person. He's too used to it. Friendship doesn't count gray hairs when they begin to appear. He will like me old, he will like me homely. I know it, and am proud of it. But it's only friendship; and I should be satisfied with that if I were altogether sure that he is not capable of feeling love. He says he isn't. He declares that he does not know what it is to attach himself to a woman because she has handsome eyes or fine dresses."

"I believe," said Cesarine, smiling in a singular way, "that he tells you the truth."

"Yes, my marchioness; but when, with fine dresses and handsome eyes, one is altogether elegant and lovable, and has a great mind, great learning, great kindness, every thing that a man could admire,—ah! it isn't possible that he shouldn't love you. That's

what I say to myself every evening, when he is at your house, and I am at home waiting for him."

"What you have said is very wrong," replied Cesarine, without showing any other emotion than a slight vexation. "Come, my poor Marguerite! are you entirely without a conscience, and wholly without reverence for the most sacred things? Do you suppose, that, if your husband was so foolish as to fall in love with me, I shouldn't discover it?"

"Perhaps, my marchioness. Don't scold me. Who can tell? Paul is so curious, so different from other people! I know that everybody isn't like him. There are those who can conceal nothing, people who are not worthy to be compared with him, but who are more open, more passionate, whose good and bad sides one knows at once. No one is long deceived by them: they go where the wind drives them. But Paul, with his reason, his courage, his patience,—no one can know any thing of him!"

"It seems to me," said Cesarine, with an irony of which Marguerite did not feel the full meaning, "that you are now making a strange allusion to the past. I should think, that, while you are putting your husband so far above mine, you had deep down in your heart something of regret for a passion less pure, but more quick, than friendship."

Marguerite blushed to the eyes, but without restraining herself from overflowing on a subject too delicate for her. I saw in presence of each other two natures as completely opposed as the mind of the romancer could fancy,—the one uniting in herself all the authority a woman is capable of exercising over herself and others; the other absolutely destitute of defence, capable

of reasoning and reflecting up to a certain point, but forced, by the nature of her feelings, to yield every thing and reveal every thing.

"You are right to laugh at me," she replied. "It is not nice to remind one of that dreadful past, when one has a better present which one does not deserve. But can't I speak of every thing to you? See, now, if I haven't reason to be jealous of you. For whom was it that I was deceived and deserted? Although Paul has never wished me to speak of it, of course some words on the subject must have escaped him. Your marquis has loved you a good while. It was in a fit of disgust that he sought me: it was to return to you that he left me. What has happened to me once may happen again. Perhaps it is my fate that you shall do me all the evil and all the good in my life."

"You have lost your head entirely, Marguerite," said I. "You forget that the Marchioness de Rivonnière no longer belongs to herself. You fail in respect to her; and you do your husband an injury. I admire the patience with which my friend listens and replies to you; and I should like to know what Paul would think of you if he should hear you."

"Ah!" she cried in a scared way, "if you tell him, I am lost."

"I shall not tell him; for I don't want to render him unhappy, by forcing him to regret his marriage."

Marguerite wept bitterly. The marchioness consoled and quieted her with maternal gentleness, telling me that I did wrong to scold her; for it was necessary to humor, and not to be rough with sick children. Marguerite sobbed at her feet, covered her with kisses, asked her pardon, swore a hundred times that she would never again

be so silly, and, hearing Paul coming, ran to the other end of the garden, so that he should not see her tears.

But he saw, and was troubled by them; and, the next day, wrote me the following letter: —

"My poor Marguerite is sick, sick at heart especially. I have made her confess, and know that she has said very stupid things to Madame de Rivonnière. I know, too, that Madame de Rivonnière is kind and wise enough to see in her only a poor child to be pitied, cared for, and cured. I know that she would be patient, and that her pity would be inexhaustible. But in this case, if she will pardon me, my pride, or rather my discretion of old times, again asserts itself. I should impose on no one but myself the care of my sick child. I think it will be very easy. It will be sufficient that I abstain from remaining at Paris during the evening for some little time to come. I shall try to arrange to call upon you sometimes about five o'clock, because you are usually at home then; and I shall deprive myself of the pleasures of after-dinner chat. Beg Mme. de Rivonnière to be a little less perfect, — that is to say, to be a little severe, and to pretend coolness towards my wife for a week or two. It isn't right that the child should become accustomed to give offence with impunity to one whom at the bottom of her heart she cherishes and respects. Do not be uneasy, my dear aunt. I know also how to take care of children; and I do not regard these childish contradictions as a misfortune. My very profound respects to our friend, and my love to you.

PAUL."

"He will have hard work to conceal it," said Cesarine, to whom I showed this letter; "but he is very

'unhappy. He yields to her, and that is worse still. He mistakes patience for force. That poor girl will not change: she will never believe in others, because she has lost the right to believe in herself. No woman, however strong she may be, can ever recover entirely from the effect of a slip; and, if she is weak, she never recovers at all. There is at the bottom of this unhappy heart a bitterness which nothing can sweeten. The weakness at which she blushes she is eager to discover in others who have nothing to blush for. If she could discover it in me, while she is furious and in despair, it would be a triumph for her, and would give her a cowardly and bitter pleasure. I told you that Paul could not marry this girl, and you felt it yourself. She will make him pay cruelly for the greatness of his soul."

"Don't you fear that the same thing will happen to you? Did you not marry without love, in a fit of generosity?"

"I married a dead man; and that is a very different thing. Besides, I took the precaution that the dead should not live again,—with me. I have done no act of sentimentality. I thought to strike a great blow; and I should have struck it, if Paul had not spoiled my work by marrying his mistress."

I did not dare to ask an explanation of these mysterious words, so much did I fear to see Cesarine overthrow the pedestal on which she had mounted. But she was weary of keeping silence: the openness of Marguerite had broken the charm; the serenity of the goddess was disturbed by that vulgar affair. Cesarine needed to speak as much as Marguerite: she spoke in spite of me.

"You don't wish to understand," she resumed, irritated by my silence.

"No," said I. "I prefer to believe."

"Cruel! How long since you have begun to laugh at the punishment which you think destiny has inflicted on me? You believe me to be conquered and broken, do you not? Well, you are mistaken. I am not so, and I will never be so. I have wished to be loved by Paul Gilbert, and I am."

"That is false," I cried. "His friendship for you is as pure as every other sentiment he has ever cherished."

"And who would wish it to be otherwise?" she replied, in her most crushing manner. "Did you ever suppose I wished to lead him into an adulterous connection, and with myself?"

"No, surely; but you think perhaps to confound his reason, torment his heart and his senses."

"I do not stoop to discover if there are senses, and whether my image troubles them. I live in a sphere of ideas and sentiments, whither such miserable questions do not penetrate. I am an elevated nature: I live above reality. You ought to be aware of this; and, when you forget it, you humble yourself more than you offend me. I have desired to be the object of Paul's most noble and most pure, at the same time as his most intense affection. Do you think I have failed?"

"If you have not failed, you have accomplished a work of malevolence and destruction. To thrust one's self into the place of his legitimate wife in the heart and thoughts of her husband, to steal away from the chosen partner the place which he ought to occupy in the heart and thoughts of his wife, is, in the lofty and solemn position you

pretend to occupy, to commit a double adultery, which does not need the addition of sensuality to be criminal. It is to play coolly with the ties of marriage, to overturn the truest notions, and create in their stead a code based upon personal affinities, in disregard of all duties. It is a scaffolding of sophisms, of lies to one's own conscience; and, all premeditated, reasoned-out, and worked up, as you have done, is hateful to me. That is my opinion; and, if you cannot hear it without being angry, let us separate. You have revealed too much: I esteem you no more. I shall try not to love you any more, either."

"How irritable and intolerant you are becoming!" she replied coldly. "Come! be calm. You tell me the truth furiously: I will tell you the truth more calmly. It may be that I am romantic; but I pretend to be so with dignity, with success, and to cause the pretended sophisms which I would make truths to triumph in my own case. You, poor thing, understand nothing of love, of duty, or of the family relations. Never having been loved, you regard virtue as consistent only with not loving. As for the science of the human heart, you cannot learn it, having no occasion to study it in yourself. You have your own ideas on social questions, — those of conventionality. You cannot see beyond these ineffectual barriers, for you are not tall enough. It seems to you that what is arranged is sacred; that I owe my entire soul to the man to whom I have sworn fidelity, just as Paul, according to your theory, owes all his heart and his every thought to Marguerite. Well, that is false, paradoxical, illusory, impossible! The hypocritical conventionality of the world says all these things, and does not believe a word of them. I am not deceived by

them, however. I understood perfectly, that in linking myself to M. de Rivonnière, whose wife I did not wish to be, I made a vow of chastity; because I ought not to force him to give his name to the children of another. He understood it also; for, in engaging to leave me free, he performed an act of absolute confidence in my loyalty. Paul, in like manner, committed no deception towards Marguerite, although the understanding between them was altogether different. He has always withheld the impossible passion which the poor fool wished to inspire in him. He gives her his protection, which is due to her, and the sensual companionship of which I am not jealous. She is his housekeeper and mistress; and she can be no more. She is not his wife, because she is not his equal before God; nor his lover, because she degrades love by her debased notions of it. He *cannot* love her. Whatever a good man *cannot* do is evil; and misplaced love dishonors the soul, and cramps the heart and the mind. You wish that I should love that woman! Your conscience tells you that is a falsehood, for she is not agreeable even to you: you make her feel it even more keenly than I do. You wish me to love my half-savage in the guise of a knight-errant, whom I married to show Paul that I had no sensuality in my composition! If I loved this Rivonnière, who, notwithstanding his fine manners and his good education, is, on another social scale, the counterpart of the rudimentary Marguerite, I should be degraded truly; but I have no taste for mean things. I love my husband as Paul loves his wife. They are two people of a different variety of the human species from that to which we belong. External circumstances have forced us to associate with them in

certain limits, — he to have children, I to have none. What we owe to them is the opposite of love. Paul owes paternity: I, chastity. Why should he be dissatisfied with my position towards my husband, when his relations with his wife are a matter of perfect indifference to me? Our bond is intelligence; our fraternity is thought; our love is ideal. We do love, and you cannot help it. Tell him, now, every thing that your clumsy prudence can suggest against me. He will not believe it: he will not even understand you. Try it: I wish you would. Leave me, and go live with him, telling him that my perversity became abhorrent to you. He will receive you with open arms; but you shall read every hour, in his sorrowful eyes, this unspoken sentence, ‘My poor aunt is under a delusion; and now I have two sick children to take care of.’”

Having thus crushed me, she went away calmly, to write to Paul that she altogether approved his desire to care personally for his companion; that she respected his wish to see her no more for a short time; but that she could not persuade herself to appear angry, as he requested, since she could pardon every thing in the mother of the adorable little Pierre. Then three pages of postscript to ask the opinion of Paul as to certain works to be consulted. The correspondence was begun. Paul’s leisure was completely occupied in replying to her letters; for she felt compelled to write to him every evening when he did not come to call upon her.



XXI.

ONE morning Marguerite fell upon us unawares. Paul had brought her to Paris to buy some articles

necessary to the boy; and she escaped to come and see *her marchioness*, whom she implored not to betray her.

“I know that I am disobeying;” she added; “but I cannot live in this way without asking your pardon. Of course you don’t require it of me; but I wanted to do it, I detest myself so much for having been so insolent and ugly to you. I will never be so again, you are so grand, and Paul is so good! When he saw how tormented I was by his having letters from you, he showed them to me. I didn’t understand a word of them, except that you approved of his remaining with me, and that you always loved me. Now, listen. I cannot accept the sacrifice which he makes for me in working in a little, close room for hours, when he might say to you every thing that he writes, in your beautiful drawing-room, with you to answer and draw out his great thoughts, which are stifled while he is with me. No, no: I will not render him unhappy and a prisoner. I have told him so, but he will not believe it; and it is for you to attract him back to your house. Write to him that you need him: he can refuse you nothing.”

“That wouldn’t be true,” replied Cesarine. “I have no need to see him to accomplish my work. I consult him to ease my conscience. When I shall have finished, I shall submit the whole thing to him; but that can be done just as well in writing.”

“No, no. It is a very different thing. He needs to talk with you, for he is terribly bored at home. What can I say to amuse him? Nothing! I am too simple and ignorant.”

Marguerite was in the habit of depreciating herself in order to get compliments, and thus have her own good opinion of herself confirmed. She was in fact very greedy of this kind of

consolation. Cesarine was not sparing of it; but she gave it with such irony, that the poor woman found her altogether too indulgent, and replied, "You say all that out of pity. You don't think it, and you are so kind that you say what is untrue to please me. I see very well that you are tired and weary of me; and I will not come again. But you can do good to me from a distance. Recall Paul to your dinners and your evening parties, — that's all I ask."

"Then you are not jealous any more? That is all over?"

"No: it is not all over. I am jealous always. The more I see of you, the more I see it is impossible not to love you; but, stupid as I am, I have more force of character and more heart than you think, and more than Paul suspects. You will see, when the time comes, I am capable of loving to the point of finding a duty, a virtue, and perhaps happiness, in my jealousy."

"That was a very profound remark," observed Cesarine as soon as Marguerite had gone. "She expressed, in her own language, a sentiment which would be very grand if she were capable of having it. To love Paul to the extent of blessing me for inspiring her with a love which he could not have for her, would be a sublime sacrifice for her untamed character. But she loves to boast, poor creature! and, if now and then she is capable of conceiving a noble sentiment, it by no means follows that she will pursue it, and realize it. It is not a work for a village girl: one doesn't learn to wring one's heart, and to cleanse and purify it, by beating linen."

"Who knows, great Cesarine? There is one thing which these primitive natures sometimes know, and which your metaphysical and other works will never teach you."

"What is that?"

"Self-abnegation."

"What has my life been, then? I thought I had never done any thing but to sacrifice my first inclinations"—

"To what? To the wish for success, from your own point of view. The wish for defeat, that another may get the victory, you will never experience. It is more beyond you than beyond Marguerite."

"You are going to make a martyr of her, a saint. That's a new way to look at it!"

"What she has just done in begging you to take her husband every evening, at the time when she is uneasy and weary, is, of itself, generous enough. You do not deign to look at it in that light; but I am much struck by it."

"That isn't the whole of it. Paul is bored with her, as she says: she is afraid he will become too weary of her, and will seek some distraction less worthy than my conversation."

"You try to depreciate her. Perhaps you are more jealous of her than she is of you."

"I, jealous of that creature!"

"You hate her, for you insult her."

"I cannot hate her: I disdain her."

"And all the kindness which you have expended to charm her, and bring her to submission, was but the hypocrisy born of your determination to rule."

"Pity allies itself very strongly with disdain: indeed, it can ally itself only with that. Noble endurance inspires respect. Pity is the alms given to the blameworthy and the weak."

Cesarine expected to see Paul return to her that very evening. He did not come; and, however sincere the penitence of Marguerite may have been, he appeared at the Dietrich mansion but rarely, and then only to say a few

words in regard to the book, the first proofs of which had been taken. He approved the changes which the author had made in it; but he did not conceal from me that these improvements did not realize all that he had expected from an entire recast of the work. Cesarine had not attained, he thought, the complete development of her ideas. He did not dare to ask her to begin all over again; and, when I reproached him with a failure of his customary frankness in literary matters, he replied, "I do not think that is true, for I do not see why the Marchioness de Rivonnière should be obliged to produce a *chef d'œuvre*: it is I who am to blame for imagining her capable of it. What she has asked me to do, I have done. I have given my opinion, and have pointed out the bad, the excellent, the weak spots. I have discussed the matter with her, and have indicated the sources of information, and the topics for reflection. What she desired, she said, was to produce a work that should be very readable, and to a slight extent profitable: this she has accomplished. I am convinced still, that, when she has become more mature, she might reach a result really worthy of her; but her friends do not ask so much of her, and she is deceived as to the merit of her work, as is the case with all who write, or else she is gifted with extreme modesty, and is contented that it should have only a moderate effect. I have no right to be more severe and exacting with her than she is with herself. If her book is but little read, and is talked about only in her own circle, that will be no obstacle to a better work by and by."

I still loved Cesarine, notwithstanding our quarrels, which became more and more animated; and perhaps I loved her so much the more, because I saw

her going astray. It became evident to me that Paul had not for her the enthusiastic, absorbing, overpowering friendship, which she flattered herself she had inspired in him. He was capable of serious affection, — of a gratitude gladly manifested by his devotion to her; but his passion did not burn within him at all, and he did not seem in the least to experience the need, which both Cesarine and Marguerite attributed to him, of being inflamed by an ideal.

Deceived in this idea, what would become of Cesarine's terrible will, if she could not devote herself to the glory of letters? I was not duped by her careless modesty. I knew that she aspired to great triumphs, and that she was connecting these two objects, — the world at her feet, and Paul conquered by the brilliancy of her glory. I suspected that defeat in either would carry the other with it. I tried to warn her; and, with the consent of Paul, I made her aware of his opinion. She was a little troubled at first, but shortly recovered, and said, "I understand, when my book is printed, he supposes I will forget the useful advice and the faithful corrector. He wishes to prolong our intimacy. He is right: I should not forget him, but I should have less occasion to see him frequently. Tell him that I acknowledge his superior judgment, and that I wish he would stop the printing. I will begin again. Tell him, too, that it costs me nothing, if he believes me capable of doing something worth while."

So much wisdom and gentleness, the real cause of which it was not permitted me to tell him, disarmed Paul, and advanced Cesarine greatly in his esteem. But the more this sentiment of esteem filled him, the more pure and peaceful did it seem to become in him.

Cesarine did not expect the obstinacy with which he refrained from visiting her: he seemed to take a real pleasure in it. I went to see him on Sunday. "Marguerite is much better," said he. "I have succeeded in persuading her that it is more agreeable to me to contribute to her pleasure than to seek distraction elsewhere. It is substantially true. To be sure, her conversation is not always brilliant, and is not so valuable as that of the marchioness and her guests; but I would rather see her satisfied than escape personal sacrifices. My duty is to render her happy; and a good man should not know if there is any thing more pleasurable than duty."

Marguerite declared that she was happy. No longer forced to work for her living, she read all that she could comprehend, and really informed herself a little; but she was sick, and her beauty was rapidly disappearing. Cesarine's physician, who saw her occasionally, told me in confidence that he thought she was afflicted with a chronic malady of the liver or stomach. She knew so little how to give an account of her sensations, that without a serious examination, to which she would not submit, he could not define her disease exactly. I informed Paul; and he insisted on the examination. Tumefaction of the liver was discovered; her general condition was low; daily attention was necessary, and all that was prescribed was not procurable in the country. The little family returned to town, to apartments in the Rue de Vaugirard, more comfortable than those in the Rue d'Assas, and very near the shades of the Luxembourg. Paul came to say to us that henceforth he was at our service at any hour. He had a clerk to keep his office, and was no more a chained slave.

He had gained money for the firm; and his connections made him valuable to M. Latour. He arrived at leisure and liberty much sooner than he had hoped. We saw more of him therefore; that is to say, we saw him oftener: but Paul did not prolong his visit beyond a single hour. He was really disturbed about his wife; and, when he was not caring for her at home, he was taking her to ride, or seeking to amuse her in some way. She was very eager to see her marchioness once more, to show her, she said, that she had become reasonable. Cesarine invited Paul to bring Marguerite to her own house, with little Pierre, promising to let them go in time for the child's hour for retiring. She insisted so strongly, that Paul yielded.



XXII.

IT was a great and joyful occasion for Marguerite. She put on her Sunday dress, — her black silk, which became her very well, — and dressed her hair with not a little taste. Little Pierre's toilet she made with extreme care. Paul put them in a carriage, and brought them to the Dietrich residence at six o'clock. Cesarine had an early dinner, so that the child should not go to sleep before dessert. She had invited no one, on account of the unreasonable hour; and it was actually a family dinner. M. Dietrich came in to shake hands with Paul, bow to his wife, and kiss his son, and then went out to dress for dinner in the city.

Cesarine had resigned herself "to converse with the fallen girl," as she said; but the latter was not in the least grieved by the kind of equality to which Cesarine had decided to admit

her. It was more than a month since they had seen each other; and Cesarine was much struck by the change which had taken place in Paul's wife. She was very thin, and her features had become pinched and sharp. She had made a great effort in that short time to become circumspect, and not to appear vulgar; and she had almost succeeded. She spoke less, and more to the point. Paul treated her, not with more consideration, for he had never failed in that respect, but with more marked gentleness, and a more earnest solicitude for her. These changes did not pass unperceived. It was a great blow to Cesarine; and, while a smile of benevolence was on her lips, a dark fire gathered in her eyes, and jealousy gnawed at that stony heart. I trembled for Marguerite.

It seemed to me, too, that Marguerite noticed it, and that she could not help appearing pleased by it. The dinner was gloomy, although little Pierre, who behaved well, and was just beginning to talk, succeeded now and then in making us laugh. Paul would gladly have been talkative; but he saw Cesarine so strangely abstracted, that he wished to know the cause of it, and felt uneasy in his own mind, without knowing why. When we left the table, he whispered to me, to inquire if the marchioness had any particular reason to be so sad. He feared that the opinion he had given in regard to her book, so well received at first, had, on reflection, discouraged her a little. Cesarine heard every thing with her eyes: low as we whispered, she knew what was the subject of our conversation. "You find me sad," said she, without giving me time to answer him. "I ask pardon of Marguerite, to whom I would wish to have given a better reception; but I am very much

troubled. I have lately received bad news from the Marquis de Rivonnière."

As she had not told me this, I supposed she had invented it as a pretext. The last letter of M. de Valbonne to M. Dietrich was not one to give occasion for any immediate uneasiness. On my saying so, she replied by reading to us what follows:—

"My poor friend disquiets me more and more every day. His life is not in greater danger, but his pains do not seem to disappear so quickly. He directs me to present his respects to you, as well as to Madame de Rivonnière.

"VISCOUNT DE VALBONNE"

This letter puzzled Paul. "What are these pains," he asked, "which do not threaten his life, but continue in a way to cause disquiet to his friends? Has M. de Valbonne never written more clearly?"

"Never," replied Cesarine. "His mind is troubled; and that affects his mode of expression, so that it is always vague. But don't let us speak of this," she added, with an air of commiseration for Marguerite. "We forget that there is some one here to whom the memory and the name of my husband are particularly disagreeable."

Paul thought this delicacy far from delicate; and, with the promptness and clearness of appreciation with which he was gifted, replied quickly and without embarrassment, "Marguerite hears the name of M. de Rivonnière without emotion. She does not know him: she has never known him."

"I thought she had some reason to complain of him," replied Cesarine, looking at her to make her lose countenance; "and surely she knows, that, in that case, I should not plead the cause of my husband before her."

"You are wrong, my marchioness," replied Marguerite, sadly but gently. "One should always defend one's husband."

"Above all, when he is absent," added Paul firmly. "As for ourselves, punished offences no longer exist. We never speak of a man whom I have had the cruel duty to kill. He who lives to-day is absolved; and the avenged wife has never more cause to blush."

He spoke with a quiet energy, at which Cesarine could take no offence, but which brought rage and despair to her soul. Marguerite, with moist eyes, cast upon Paul a look of delighted gratitude. I saw that Cesarine was going to say something cruel. "The child is asleep," I cried. "You ought not to stay any longer: your carriage is below. Take Monsieur Pierre, my dear Paul: he is too heavy for me."

At this instant, Bertrand came to announce that the carriage had arrived; and, he added with distinct voice and with unalterable serenity, "M. the Marquis de Rivonnière has arrived also."

"Where?" cried Cesarine, as if shot.

"At the house of Madame la Marquise," replied Bertrand with the same calmness. "He is coming up the stairs."

"We will take leave of you," said Paul, taking Marguerite under one arm, and the boy upon the other.

"No! Remain! It is necessary!" replied Cesarine desperately.

"Why?" asked Paul, astonished.

"It is necessary, I tell you. I beg you to remain."

"Very well," said he, returning to the sofa; where he placed the sleeping child, and made Marguerite sit down beside him.

Did Cesarine fear the jealousy of her husband? Did she mean to show him

that she received Paul in company with his wife? Or, more occupied with her own spite than with any thing else, did she find revenge in a new meeting between Marguerite and her seducer in the presence of Paul? Perhaps she was too much agitated to know what she wished and what she did; but, prompt to recover self-control, she went out to meet the marquis. We heard her exclaim from the landing, in a loud voice, "What a nice surprise! How! Cured! And they wrote that you were no better!"

"Valbonne is mad," replied the marquis in a full and hearty voice. "I am well. I am cured, you see. I walk, speak, go up stairs, without help;" and, entering the anteroom to the drawing-room, he added, "you have company?"

"No," replied Cesarine, entering first, "only friends of yours and mine, who were going, but want to shake hands with you first."

"Friends?" repeated the marquis, finding himself face to face with Paul. "Friends? I do not recognize" —

"You do not recognize M. Paul Gilbert and his wife?"

"Ah! I beg pardon. It is so dark here, — My dear friend!"

He shook hands with Paul, to whom he addressed the last words. "Madame, I present you my best respects," bowing profoundly to Marguerite. "Ah, Mlle. Nermont! Happy to see you once more;" and he kissed my hand. "You seem to be in good health."

"But you?" said Paul.

"I? Perfectly well, thank you. I bear travelling remarkably."

"But why did you come without notifying us?" asked Cesarine.

"I had the honor to write you."

"I have received nothing from you."

"When I tell you that Valbonne is insane!"

"My dear friend, I don't understand. Why is he permitted to suppress your letters?"

"It will be a long story to tell you, — a story of crazy doctors about a sick man, who is in full revolt because he will not race about any longer for the health he has fully recovered."

"You come from Italy?" asked Paul.

"Yes, my dear friend, — a country much overrated, like every one that is praised to a foreigner. I like France only; and, in France, I like only Paris. What is the news of your young friend M. Latour?"

"He is well."

"M. Dietrich is out, I have been told. But he is to return early. Will Madame la Marquise permit me to await him here?"

"Certainly, my friend. Have you dined?"

"I have dined, thank you."

Paul exchanged a few more polite but insignificant words with the marquis and Cesarine before withdrawing. The startling arrival of M. de Rivonnière had restored the situation to a dead calm. He was quiet, good-humored, and polite. He was excited and astonished at nothing: in other words, he dropped back into the world as if he had never quitted it. He returned from the dead as he might have returned from Orleans. He found himself once more at his wife's house, in presence of his rival and murderer, and of the woman for the possession of whom he had paid with his blood, all at once, without seeming to remember any thing but the laws of good manners, and the customs which should be observed in every meeting, however strange it may be. The imperturba-

bility of the perfect gentleman covered every thing else.

On bad terms with her conscience, Cesarine had been frightened for a moment; but strong in something stronger than the customs of society, strong in her intrepid woman's will, she had speedily recovered her presence of mind. At the same time, she felt some uneasiness at being left alone with her husband, and begged me to remain, quietly telling me that she wished it, while they were lighting the chandelier.

"At last," said the marquis, as soon as Bertrand was gone, "I see you again, Madame la Marquise, more beautiful than ever, and with happiness and good-humor speaking from your eyes. Indeed, one would have said you are glad to see me."

Cesarine's face did not express that joy precisely. I asked myself if he were rallying her, or was under a delusion. "I do not answer such a question," said she with the best smile she could muster. "It is my turn to look at you. Truly you are well: any one would know it. But what did the fear of your friend mean, when he said you were incurable?"

"Valbonne is very much excited. He is an incomparable friend; but he has the weakness of looking on the dark side, so much the more because he believes in the doctors. You will say that I ought to believe in them too, owing so much to them. I believe only in Nelaton, who extracted the ball. The cause removed, these doctors undertook also to relieve me of the effects, as if there were ever effects without a cause. Instead of letting me get well, they treated me as most of them always do, in a manner totally opposed to my temperament. When, a year ago almost, I cut away from their authority to follow my own instincts, I

felt better immediately. I went away. **Three** days afterwards I. felt cured. **There** were sharp pains remaining, but **that** was all. But I had already had **those** two or three years before I had **the** honor of being acquainted with **you**; and I got rid of them by paying **no** attention to them. When Valbonne **carried** me off this time, he committed **me** to the charge of a young doctor, intelligent but obstinate, who, disturbed **at** seeing me cured so quickly, with no **aid** but that of my vigorous constitution, wished to relieve me of these pains wholly, and has actually rendered them much more violent. I had to send him about his business, quarrel a little with my poor Valbonne, and then give them both the slip, so as not to become the victim of their devotion to my person."

"Give them the slip!" said Cesarine. "Then they didn't return with you?"

"I came with Dubois alone, my best physician. He understands that it isn't necessary to get excited in opposing people; and, when I am suffering, he is patient with me. That is the best way too."

"And where are the others?"

"Valbonne and the doctor? I don't know. I left them at Marseilles, where they were going to make me embark for Corsica, under the pretext that I would find there a summer climate suited to me. I agreed to the plan, but didn't care to carry it out. I confided to Dubois *my* plan of coming to Paris to remain; and we left them in the sweetness of slumber. Of course they came after us; but we had twelve hours' start, and they can't be here till to-morrow."

"This is all very strange," said Cesarine. "I didn't suppose you so apt a scholar; and I cannot imagine a doctor

and a friend so tyrannical as to force a sick man to flight. Ought I not to suppose that you had the nice idea of surprising me, and that you did not wish to leave your companions a chance to warn me?"

"Perhaps there's something in that, my dear marchioness."

"Why surprise me? With what intention?"

"To see if the first effect of the surprise would be joy or displeasure."

"That's a very bad idea, my friend. It indicates a suspiciousness which proves to me that you are not so thoroughly cured as you say."

"It is right to be suspicious of the little I have obtained of you."

While Cesarine and her husband were chatting thus, I observed the latter closely; and, having been at first struck with the appearance of health and strength which he seemed to possess, I began to be alarmed by a very singular change in his looks. His eyes were no longer what they had been. They had an extraordinary glitter; and this characteristic increased when, provoked to explanation, he shut himself up to a more self-contained courtesy. Was he devoured by a secret jealousy? Was he having a relapse of his fever? Or was that staring, sparkling eye an ineffaceable mark which the nervousness of great physical suffering had left upon him?

While I was reflecting thus, Bertrand came to say that Dubois was at the service of the marquis.

"I understand," replied M. de Rivonnière. "He wishes to take me away. He fears that I may be tired. Tell him I am very well, and am waiting for M. Dietrich."

Then he resumed his painful interview with his wife, questioning her in regard to all her old companions, and

appearing not to have lost memory of the least detail which could interest him. His strange eye alarmed me still. I thought I heard Dubois's voice in the adjoining room. I arose as if without any particular intention, and went to question him.

"Madame la Marquise must send away M. le Marquis," he replied in a low voice. "It is almost time for his attack."

"His attack of what?"

Dubois raised his hand to his forehead in a perplexed way.

"Of what? Pains?"

"Terrible pains."

"Do they make him low-spirited, or furious?"

"First one, and then the other."

"Does he become delirious?"

"Alas, yes! Don't these ladies know it?"

"No: we know nothing."

"Then M. de Valbonne wished to conceal it. But now it is better that every thing should be known. It must be a secret from the world only."

"Does he have fever in his paroxysms?"

"No; and that is why I am always hopeful."

"It is perhaps a reason why we ought to be the more disturbed. Let us speak plainly, Dubois. Your master is insane, is he not?"

"Well, yes, undoubtedly; but he has been so twice before, and was cured. Does mademoiselle believe he was in his right mind when he seduced and abandoned that poor girl" —

"She is now the wife of my nephew."

"Ah! I forgot; but I beg pardon, I have nothing but good to say of her, — an angel of honesty and disinterestedness. M. le Marquis did not commit that act in his normal condition; and later, when he disguised himself to

watch the conduct of Mlle. Dietrich, I saw he was not in his right mind. He was wild at night, as now; but he did not have lucid days, as he now does."

"Then he is furiously mad at night?"

"Not furious, but fantastic and violent. With me, there is no danger. He resists me, gets angry, and then yields. He never maltreats me. Any one else exasperates him. He has an aversion for his doctor, and a dislike for M. de Valbonne. I advised him to quit Marseilles, where his condition could not be concealed; and the reason I gave was, that they took bad care of him. Really they took good care of him; but, when a sick man is irritated, it is best that he should have a change of scenes and faces. I have appointed a meeting for to-night with his old doctor. I wanted him to see the marquis in his worst state, but that begins about nine o'clock; and it is necessary that Madame la Marquise should send him away. I do not believe he will resist, he loves her so much."

"He loves her still, then?"

"More than ever."

"And isn't jealous about her?"

"Ah! that I don't know; but I fear he conceals even from me the true cause of his illness."

"Of whom could he be jealous?"

"Always of the same person."

A quick and violent ringing of the bell interrupted us. I returned to the drawing-room as quickly as possible, at the same time as Bertrand. Dubois waited upon the threshold anxiously.

"M. le Marquis wishes to retire," said Cesarine hurriedly. It was like an angry order to her husband to go.

The marquis burst into a laugh, — a convulsive, frightful laugh. "Come, now," said he, "I haven't a right to wait at my wife's house for my father-in-law, have I? I shall stay: don't any

of you be disturbed. Leave me alone with her. I haven't finished talking with her yet."

"Bertrand," cried Cesarine, "will conduct M. le Marquis to his carriage."

She addressed in a tone of distress the champion devoted to her defence in great emergencies. He advanced coolly, ready to seize the marquis with his stout arms; when Dubois darted forward, and held him. Dubois then took his master's arm, saying, "Monsieur le Marquis gave me his word of honor to return at nine o'clock. It is half-past nine."

The marquis seemed to awake as from a dream, looked at his white-haired old servant with childish fear. "You have come to defeat me?" said he with a stupid look. "You shall pay me for that."

"Yes, at home. I should like that. But come."

"You old brute! I yield to-day, but to-morrow" —

Dubois led him away unresisting. Bertrand followed, all ready to lend a helping hand in case of need. We silently watched them until, having seen the marquis in his carriage, Bertrand returned to tell us he was gone.

"Bertrand," said Cesarine, "if it ever happens again that M. de Rivonnière presents himself at my door in a state of intoxication, tell him I am not at home, and do not allow him to enter."

"M. le Marquis is not intoxicated," replied Bertrand in his dignified manner; and then with an expressive and respectful gesture, which asked me to explain all, he retired.

"What does he mean?" cried Cesarine.

"Do you believe," I asked, "that your husband gets intoxicated?"

"Yes, certainly. He is drunk this

evening: his eye showed it. Why did you leave us alone? I asked you to remain. Hardly had you gone, when he cast himself at my feet, and began to make the most ridiculous protestations of love; and, when I reminded him of the agreement between us, he remembered nothing of it. He became ugly, silly, almost coarse. Oh, I hate him! — this man who pretends that I belong to him, when I never did."

"Do not hate him: pity him. He is not drunk: he is insane."

She dropped upon a sofa, without being able to say a word. Then she put questions to me rapidly. I told her all that Dubois had told me. She listened with fixed and haggard countenance.

At last she said, "This is a horrible thing, that never entered my mind, — to be the wife of a fool; to have the most odious of battles with a man who retains neither the memory of his own promises nor the consciousness of my rights; to fight not against another will, but against an insane instinct; to feel myself bound, healthy and living, to a brute deprived of reason. It is impossible. The chain is broken by the single fact of insanity. It must be stated openly. The world must know it; and this man must be shut up to preserve me from his fury. I cannot live in dread of being at the mercy of a crazy man. I have done nothing criminal, to have this punishment inflicted upon me all the time. Ah, how did Valbonne, who hates me, deceive me! He knew it; and he made me marry a madman. I will unveil his conduct. I will make him blush before the world!"

M. Dietrich returned. She told him the story in a few words, and continued to breathe out her anger and chagrin in threats and complaints, adjuring her father to protect her, and to take im-

mediate steps to annul her marriage. She wished a divorce: separation would not suffice. M. Dietrich, overwhelmed at first, aroused himself as soon as he saw his daughter so distracted. He was, after all, admirably clear-headed in a great crisis. "You speak ill, my daughter," said he; "and you do not think what you say. Because Jacques has agitated nights, and hours when he is out of his head, it does not follow that he is mad, when a poor old man like Dubois can restrain him, and enable him to conceal his condition. To-morrow we shall know more; but to-day, what we do know is not enough to justify the cruel measure of a legal separation. Remember that it would inflict a mortal wound upon the dignity of him whose name you have accepted. It would be to accuse him and his friends of fraud; and who tells you that any tribunal would pronounce against him? In any case, public opinion would condemn you; for no one is relieved from the performance of duty, however painful it may be. Yours is to wait patiently for an improvement in the condition of your husband, and to do all that you can, without injury to your pride, or compromise of your independence, to calm and cure him. If, after exhausting gentle and persuasive means, we are forced to let it be known that the disease is aggravated, and leaves no room for hope, it will be time to think of taking more vigorous measures. Otherwise, you will be cruelly and justly blamed for having refused your care and consolation."

Cesarine, baffled, could say nothing, and passed the night in deep despair. I did not dare to leave her until morning. I feared that she would be driven to some desperate act. She restrained herself, and had no fits of

hysterics; but her grief was terrible. She wept: she said she had no future to look forward to, and her life was sacrificed to something worse than widowhood,—the incessant duty of employing her superior intelligence in restraining the wild passions, or yielding to the puerile desires, of an idiot, ill-tempered in his sane hours, always jealous, and daring to call himself enamoured of her.

The punishment was cruel indeed; but in vain did she represent it to me as an injustice of fate. She had married this dying man, partly in the ostentation of generosity, partly to elevate herself in Paul's estimation, a little also to be a marchioness, and independent into the bargain.

XXIII.

THE next morning M. Dietrich went to see his son-in-law. Finding him asleep, he had a long time to talk with Dubois and the doctor, who had passed the night with the sick man. The result of the observations of his condition was, that he was neither mad nor wholly sane. His brain was in turn over-excited and depressed. A few hours of the day, after the rest of the morning, which was complete, and before the return of his paroxysms in the evening, he would be perfectly sane; and no consultation of physicians, conducted with entire fairness, would lead to the conclusion that he was incapable of managing his affairs, or of treating every one with perfect courtesy. The doctor had conversed with him since his attack, and had found him very well, in body and mind. The doctor did not think he had ever been weak-minded. Simply the prey of a nervous malady, was the manner

in which he summed it up, either the result of his wound, or of the great but hopeless passion which he had entertained, and still had, for his wife.

So there was presented a startling alternative. If Cesarine yielded to his love, would she cure him? If so, was there not reason to fear that the children resulting from their union would be predisposed to organic disease? The doctor neither could nor would say. M. Dietrich was sure his daughter would destroy herself, rather than join herself to a man who would keep her in perpetual terror, and to whose control she would be mortified to yield. He retired without having come to any conclusion. There was nothing for it but to be patient and wait, while purely persuasive means were employed; to observe the effects, and to separate husband and wife, if the result of these endeavors was unfavorable. Then travelling must be tried again. There was no opportunity for any thing more than a compromise; but, in any case, until further developments, M. Dietrich desired that the state of the marquis should be kept secret; and Dubois declared this to be possible, through the local arrangement of the house, and the blind devotion of the servants being fully trustworthy.

Two hours afterwards M. de Valbonne, who had arrived by the night-train, came to talk upon the same subject with M. Dietrich. M. de Valbonne was headstrong and opinionated. He did not like Cesarine, perhaps because he had loved her in vain before her marriage. He thought her blameworthy for not wishing to live with his friend; and when M. Dietrich recalled to his memory the compact of honor by which, in case of his recovery,

Jacques bound himself not to claim his rights, the viscount declared that Jacques was too honorable to think of claiming them: it was an insult to him to fear any such thing.

"However," said M. Dietrich, "he caused a scene last evening, and during his madness remembered nothing about it."

"Yes," said M. de Valbonne: "he was then under the control of his madness, I confess; and if his wife had not been the voluntary or unconscious cause of his insanity, by keeping him under her thumb for five years, she might be justified in her pitiless conduct towards him; but she desired him for a friend and servant. She made him too much a slave, and too unhappy. I will even say that she has degraded him too much, not to owe a duty to him now."

"I do not permit you to judge my daughter, Monsieur le Vicomte. I know, that, in marrying your friend against her inclination, she only had in view to raise him from that sort of abasement into which a too submissive and too devoted man sometimes falls."

"Yes; but duty changes with circumstances. Jacques was condemned to death. The reparation given by Mlle. Dietrich was sufficient then, and easily made, permit me to say. She gained a good name" —

"Remember, monsieur, that she was not tired of bearing mine, and that she would not accept her husband's fortune."

"She will have it, all the same. She will play with it, at least, for she has the right to it. She is his wife. Nothing can prevent her, and the law restrains him."

"You are speaking of me," said Cesarine, who entered the room in time to hear the last words. "I am

very glad to know your opinion, Monsieur de Valbonne, and to tell you with a kind greeting, that it shall never be mine."

M. de Valbonne explained, and, assuring her as well as he could of the loyalty of the marquis, freely expressed his personal opinion of the existing situation. If Cesarine reported his words correctly to me, he did so with very little tact, and wounded her cruelly by saying that she ought to abjure every other secret affection, however pure it might be, to restore hope, rest, and reason, to the man with whom she had trifled so long and so cruelly.

Then followed a very bitter and very animated discussion, which M. Dietrich tried in vain to stop. Cesarine reminded the viscount that he had paid court to her, and she had refused him. From that day he had hated her, she said; and his devotion to Jacques de Rivonnière was but the cover of an atrocious sentiment of revenge. The quarrel was at its height when Bertrand entered to inquire if any one had seen the marquis. He had ushered the marquis into the great drawing-room, where, he said with entire calmness, he would await Madame la Marquise. Bertrand had gone to Cesarine's apartment to inform her, but, not finding her there, had returned to the drawing-room to say to M. de Rivonnière that he was going to seek her in M. Dietrich's room; but the marquis was not there, and other servants had seen him go into the garden. Bertrand had not found him in the garden either, nor in the marchioness's room; but he was very sure that M. de Rivonnière had not quitted the premises.

M. Dietrich and M. de Valbonne began the search. Cesarine returned

to her room, where the marquis had glided, unobserved, and was waiting for her. She started in fright, and made a movement towards the bell-rope. He prevented her, placing himself in the way. "Listen to me," said he. "It is the last time. I know your house too well to wander at random. I wished to speak to your father. I immediately went to his library, where I overheard you and Valbonne talking. I listened. A condemned man has the right to know the grounds of his sentence. I learned one thing which I did not know before, — that I am insane, — and one thing which I would like still to doubt, that your indifference towards me is changed to terror and aversion. I am very unhappy, Cesarine; but I absolve you from having been knowingly the cause. You have never known, and you will never know, love; and that is why you have never suspected the fervor of mine. You never believed that one could go mad from love: you have always laughed at my complaints and my raptures. It is enough to suffer: you shall do me no more injury. Could you but forget that which you have done to me, and never appreciate the extent of it! for you will have remorse. I spare you reproaches; for, insane or not, I feel as calm at this moment as if I were dead. Adieu. If I were vindictive, I should be satisfied in thinking that your passion, for the time being, is to reduce to submission a man whom you will never conquer. He will always prefer his wife to you. I have seen him just now, and I know what he thinks. You will suffer in your pride; for he is stronger in his virtue, than you in your ambition. But I am not disturbed about your future: you will seek other victims, and will find them.

Be happy, therefore, in your way. For my part, I shall forget this sorrowful passion, which has unsettled my reason and embittered my existence."

I entered Cesarine's room just as the marquis began to speak. When he had finished he came to me, took my hand, and kissed it, without a word, and went out without turning around.

Anxious, I wished to follow him. "Let him go," said Cesarine, making a sign to Bertrand, who was waiting in the entry, and followed the marquis. "He does justice to himself. His reproaches are unjust and cruel; but I will not reply to them. On the least excuse, the least consolation I might offer him, he would begin to talk again of his rights and his hopes. Let him alone break this odious chain."

Bertrand returned to tell us that the marquis had entered his carriage, and given orders to drive home.

"Did Dubois accompany him?"

"No, Madame la Marquise. Dubois sits up with the marquis all night, and sleeps by day. But M. de Valbonne, who hadn't left the house, rode away with M. de Rivonnière."

"Never mind, Bertrand: find out what passes at his house, and come and tell me."

Bertrand obeyed, first announcing my nephew.

"Come!" cried Cesarine. "Give me your advice, judge me, aid me: I am distracted. Be my friend and my guide!"

"I know all," replied Paul. "I have just seen M. Dietrich. He thinks only of preserving you. Nor do you have any other purpose. You would not follow the advice my conscience would give you."

"I will follow it," cried Cesarine excitedly.

"Well, call for your carriage, and

run to your husband; for I saw him riding away, looking so crushed in spirit, that I fear every thing. He pressed my hand as he passed; and his look seemed to express an eternal farewell."

"I will do it," said Cesarine, ringing the bell.

"But it is not all to go and give him empty words of consolation," resumed Paul. "You must remain near him, watch with him in his hours of delirium, amuse him, and re-assure him in his hours of sanity. If he wishes to leave Paris, you must follow him: you must be his wife, in one word, in the Christian and the human sense, consistently and devotedly."

"Ah, that is — what you advise?" cried Cesarine, convulsively snatching, and bearing to her dry and quivering lips, a glass of cold water. "You tell me to be the wife of M. de Rivonnière?"

"And why not?" he replied. "I am the latest and the most disinterested of your friends. You consult me: otherwise it would not be permitted me to tell you what I think."

"What you think is odious. A woman ought not to respect herself? She ought to give herself away without love, like a sold slave?"

"No, never! But if she is a noble woman, if she has a heart, if she pities the misfortune which she has voluntarily caused, she makes pity transform itself into love. What is love, then, but charity in its highest manifestation?"

"Ah, yes! You think so! You wish that I should love my husband out of charity, as you love your wife."

"I did not say *out of* charity, but *with* charity. I have invoked what is purest and grandest, what sanctifies love, and makes marriage something sacred."

"It is well," said Cesarine, all at once cold and calm. "You have judged: I obey."

She went out without permitting me to follow her. "Yes: it is well, Paul," said I to my nephew, embracing him. "You alone have had the courage to trace out her duty for her."

But he gently repulsed my caresses; and, falling upon a sofa, burst into a nervous laugh, intermingled with stifled sobs.

"What is this?" I cried. "What ails you? Are you sick? Are you mad?"

"No, no!" he replied, with a violent effort to become calm. "It is nothing. I — but it is nothing."

"But, indeed, — what is the trouble? Unhappy boy, you love her, then?"

"No, aunt. I do not love her in the sense you attach to the word. She is not my ideal, the object of my life. If she thinks so, undeceive her: she is not even my friend, my sister, my child, like Marguerite. My senses are grossly and foolishly captivated by her beauty, no more. If she wishes to know, tell her, and dispel any delusions from her mind. But, no! tell her nothing; for she would consider herself avenged for my resistance, and she is the woman to rejoice in my torture. It is not so serious a matter as she thinks. Women always exaggerate the wounds which it pleases them to inflict upon us. I am not M. de Rivonnière! I shall not go mad, or die of grief, or even suffer very long. I am a man. Never has the lust of the mind or of the flesh, as they say in the church, carried me away, or affected my reason, my conscience, or my will. The advice which I have just given cost me a struggle, I confess. But I conquered myself;

and this dream has vanished, as every other vanity of the brain of a man at twenty-five may be driven off without injury. Say nothing to me, aunt: I am not a hero, still less a martyr. I am a man; and nothing human is foreign to me, as the philosopher has it. Thus prudence, the sentiment of honor, and self-respect are as familiar to me as the emotions of youth. I give the preference to what is right, over what is simply agreeable. 'Duty before pleasure,' always; and, thanks to that maxim, duty is always pleasant. Now let us speak of Marguerite, my good aunt. She affects me, and interests me much more. She is not well; and I am more uneasy every day on her account. It would almost seem that she is concealing something from me; but, what it is, I in vain try to guess. Come and see her some day. I will leave you alone, and you shall try to draw her out. I must go back to her. Can I drink this glass of water? It will serve to bring me back to myself completely."

He took the glass; then, remembering that Cesarine in her agitation had put her lips to it, he replaced it, took another from the sideboard, saying with a half-bitter, half-playful laugh, "I don't need to know her thoughts: indeed, I do know them."

"You think you know her, perhaps."

"I did know her: then I was deceived again. After accusing her too strongly, I justified her too much. But just now, when she asked me, 'Is it you who advise me to be the wife of another?' I comprehended her delusion, her task, her aim. I had already suspected every thing, from her conduct yesterday towards Marguerite, from her bitter smile, and her insulting words. She is not so strong as she supposes, at least, not stronger

Man I. And yet, I repeat, aunt, I am not a hero: I am a man of my time, whom woman shall govern no more, unless by becoming loyal, and loving in earnest. A little more progress, and coquettes, like all other tyrants, will have for adorers only corrupt and effeminate men."

He left me re-assured, so far as he was concerned, but anxious about Cesarine. I did not dare to go and see her; but I asked to see M. Dietrich. He had gone away with her.

Bertrand came an hour later to tell me, in behalf of the marchioness, that M. de Rivonnière was calm, and that she begged me to come at eight o'clock, and pass the evening. I was prompt. I found the marquis melancholy, effusive, and grateful. Cesarine said to me before him, as soon as I entered, 'We didn't invite you to dinner, because nothing is in order. The marquis has given us a very bad dinner, but that isn't his fault. Tomorrow Dubois and I shall take the housekeeping in charge, and things will go better. But, in compensation for our bad dinner, we have had a charming ride in the Bois: all Paris was there.'

He was so quiet and self-possessed, that I found it difficult not to appear surprised. "Take your work, if you wish," said she. "You never like to remain inactive. My father was just telling us about to-day's session." M. Dietrich continued to talk politics to the marquis; wishing, perhaps, to assure himself of the latter's sanity, but proceeding as though he had no doubt of it. I was convinced that his purpose was a conscientious attempt to cure him. The marquis listened, evidently not without effort; but his replies were apt. From time to time,

he manifested some anxiety, as he looked at the clock. The unfortunate man, since he now knew that he was reputed mad, seemed to be conscious of his insanity, and to dread its approach.

He was undoubtedly very much on his guard; for he triumphed over the fatal hour, and reached ten o'clock without once losing his presence of mind, or appearing to be in any pain.

Then he fell into a sort of thoughtful dejection, listened less and less to what was said to him, and at last did not reply at all. "I see you are in pain," said Cesarine to him. "You should go to bed: we will remain here in the drawing-room until you are asleep. Father and I will play chess. If you can't sleep, you can come back."

He answered by a meaningless smile; and no one knew whether he understood. Dubois led him away. M. Dietrich slipped into a room adjoining his son-in-law's bed-chamber. He wished to listen, and observe the phenomena of the attack. Dubois left the doors open.

Cesarine, who remained in the drawing-room with me, went noiselessly by, back and forth. Soon she called me to listen also. The marquis was in frightful suffering, and was complaining to Dubois like a child. The brave servant comforted him, saying patiently, again and again, "This will all pass away, Monsieur: it will soon pass away."

The pain increased: the poor man called for his pistols, and then came nearly an hour of violence, during which he loaded Dubois, with insults and reproaches for wishing to preserve his life. But he had not energy enough to be openly rebellious, as his suffering paralyzed his will. All at once, the pain ceased; and he became

demented. He spoke low: we could follow nothing, and understand nothing; but we found that he passed from one subject to another, all of them puerile and silly. We heard better the replies of Dubois, who contradicted him obstinately. He was no longer fearful of irritating the sick man.

"You know very well that there is not a word of truth in what you say," said Dubois. "You are in Paris, and not in Geneva. The jeweller has not deranged your watch to play you a dirty trick. Your watch goes very well; and no jeweller has meddled with it."

We heard the marquis say, "Ah! there it is! you think me mad. That's your idea!"

"No, monsieur," replied the patient old man. "I knew you when you were little: I have, I might say, raised you. You are not mad: you have never been so. But you were always a great joker, and you are now. You used to have a long string of stories to make sport of me; and it is your habit still. Now, I am in the habit of listening to you, and not believing a word you say."

The marquis spoke again, lower; then distinctly and rationally. "My friend," said he, "I feel that my head is all right again, and I am going to sleep; but you must remind me of what I did yesterday, for I remember nothing at all of it."

"I shall not tell you, because then you would not sleep. When one wishes to sleep, one should remember nothing, and think of nothing. Now go to bed. To-morrow you will remember."

"As you will; only something troubles me. Was I very ugly just now?"

"You? never!"

"I didn't abuse you when I was suffering?"

"That you never did, so far as I know."

"You lie, Dubois: I struck you, perhaps?"

"What is in your head? Why do you talk so to-day?"

"Because, it seems to me that I remember a little, at least, as though it were a dream. Dream or not, embrace me, my poor Dubois, and go to bed. I am very well."

Fifteen minutes afterwards, we heard him breathing regularly. He was in deep sleep. Dubois came to find us.

"M. le Marquis is saved," said he. "He does not yet know how much good you have done him; but he shows an improvement. His attack was shorter and less violent than usual. Keep on, and you will see him grow better and better. Grief crushed him; and happiness will cure him, I have no doubt."

M. Dietrich inquired if it was the first time the marquis had a vague consciousness of his violence.

"Yes, monsieur, it is the first time: you see his good heart asserting itself; and how he embraced me, poor child! Just as when he was a little boy!"

It was five o'clock in the morning. Dubois had caused to be prepared for us the room occupied by Mme. de Montherme when she came to Paris after her brother was wounded. She was not aware of his return, and was passing the summer at Rouen, where her husband had business to attend to. We therefore retired, and were able to be present, in a manner, when the marquis awoke, remaining in the room from which we had overheard the affair of the night before. He aroused Dubois at nine o'clock, and, casting himself on his neck, cried, "My friend, I remember all about yesterday. I was cruelly tried. I learned that I was insane, and that my wife was afraid of me. But then she came to me at the

moment when I had coolly resolved to blow out my brains. She was as good as an angel: her father was good too. They treated me like a child, but like a beloved child. They took me, whether I would or no, in their carriage, and rode with me through the most beautiful parts of Paris, to show people that I was indeed cured, to make them believe I was not insane, and that my wife pretended to live with me. That did me both good and evil. I see that she wishes to vindicate my dignity, and that she would relieve me from the embarrassment of my situation. I am glad of this: she acts nobly the part of a wife who will cause the name she bears to be respected. She has done me great good: she has destroyed my jealousy; for, in pretending to live with me, she has given up any other hopes she may have been encouraging. There was but one coward who would share these hopes even in appearance; and the man whom I suspected of loving her, in spite of himself, is a man of courage, and very proud. Every thing is right so far as my wife is concerned, also her father, and that excellent Mlle. de Nermont, who has always given the best of advice."

"Does Monsieur not know that they were here all night, and are here still!"

"What do you say? Oh, misfortune! They have seen me, then, in my madness?"

"No, monsieur: they might have seen you, but you had no attack."

"That is false, Dubois. I have them every night. Valbonne confessed it to me, and I remember. My wife wished to learn the truth; and now she knows all, and can never love me."

Cesarine entered, hearing him sobbing. She found him in his dressing-gown, seated before the mirror, and

weeping bitterly. She embraced him, and said, "Your insanity is in believing yourself insane; otherwise you are of sound mind. We were mistaken: you have your reason. That it is slightly unsettled for a few hours at night no longer disquiets me. I undertake to cure you by remaining with you, to console and entertain you, and to prove to you that I have no better or dearer friend than you are."

"Remain, then!" he replied, dropping on his knees at her feet. "Remain, without fear, and cure me! I will yet get well. The man whose wife you have declared yourself, by showing yourself in public with him, must not be insane, and an idiot. I will be as submissive as a child; and my gratitude shall be stronger than my passion, for I will no more forget my vows. What I have sworn to do, I will do. Take care, then, of your friend, your brother, until he shall be worthy to become your protector."

It was to this point that Cesarine wished to lead him. She could take care of the sick better than she could do any thing else; and she entered on the task courageously. She installed herself at her husband's house, and prayed me to remain with her. M. Dietrich returned home, but came to dine with us every day. Bertrand passed the night in watching every thing, always ready to assist in the control of the sick man if he became violent; although Dubois was not weary of his task. In a very few days, the attacks, which had been steadily becoming less violent, disappeared almost entirely; and every thing betokened a speedy and complete cure. Visits were received and returned. A vague rumor of the marquis's insanity had obtained currency. Every appearance, and even the reality, belied the rumor.

XXIV.

I SAW Marguerite quite frequently, and was not so free from anxiety on her account as on that of the marquis. She was steadily growing more ill: wearing away in a slow fever, she had hardly strength to leave her bed. Paul observed with uneasiness the absolute powerlessness of all remedies. After a consultation of physicians, which increased our alarm by leading to no positive opinion of her case, Marguerite saw, notwithstanding all our pains to conceal it, that she was practically given over as incurable. "Listen," she said to me, when we were alone together one day: "I am going to die. I know it, because I feel it. It is time that I should speak while I can. I am going to die, because I ought, because I wish to. I have done very wrong. I trust in you as I would in God. You can repair the wrong, if you think it proper. I intercepted a letter written to Paul. I opened it, and read it; and then hid it. Paul does not know it; but let me tell you, that, when I performed this base act, I had already determined to die, because I had guessed all. Now read."

She handed me a crumpled paper, hot with her fever, and moist with her tears, which she carried in her bosom as if it were a poison which she was voluntarily absorbing. It was in Cesarine's hand, and was dated a fortnight back.

"Paul," she wrote, "you desired it. I am at *his* house. I shall save him: he is already saved. I am lost myself; for, as soon as he is cured, I shall have no more excuse for leaving him, and claiming my liberty. It will be necessary that I shall be his wife. Do you understand? His love is unconquerable, — it is his life; and, if he loses

hope once more, he will destroy himself. You desired it: I will be his wife! But know, that, first, I would be yours. You love me, I know; but we must part forever: our duty requires it, and we will not be cowardly. But we must say *adieu* to each other; and we will live one day, which will sum up for us an entire life. I will let you know the day for this supreme farewell; and I will find a pretext for my absence, which can serve for you as well. Do not reply, and betray nothing by your looks."

I read this note over three times. I tried to believe myself the victim of a delusion. I tried to doubt if it was Cesarine's writing; but doubt was impossible. Passion had conquered her: she flung pride and shame to the winds. She fell from the sublime heights to which she had wished to soar, to the lowest and basest of human weaknesses. She regarded herself as debased by the love of her own husband: she wished to render herself guilty first. Strange and deplorable folly, which made me blush for her so that I could not conceal my indignation from Marguerite!

The poor woman did not understand me. "It was very wrong, wasn't it?" said she, hearing my exclamations. "Yes: it was very wrong to intercept such a letter as that. But what could I do? I hadn't the courage that I longed for. I said to myself, 'Thou I am going to die! He loves her: she says so. He deceives me by his virtue and his kindness; but he loves her: that is very certain. If he didn't tell her so, she saw it; and so have I. Poor Paul! How unhappy he has been on my account! how he has struggled against it! how grand and generous he has been! I have done wrong to keep him out of happiness. It would be better

for him that I had not lived. I have lived too long. Every day I remain, it seems to me, I am robbing him. Ah! I have been cowardly. I ought to have said to him, 'Give me a few weeks yet to look at my poor child, for I would not like to forget him when I am dead! Then go to the meeting with her. It will not be the last. You love each other so much, that you will not be conscious of wrong in loving; only don't tell me any thing. Let me believe that perhaps you will not go. Pardon me for having been your burden, your jailer, your punishment; but know that I have loved you more than she ever did, for I am going to die that you may have her love; and she would never have done that for you.'

She spoke in this strain for a long time, with excitement, and almost eloquently. I did not interrupt her, for meanwhile Paul had noiselessly entered. He remained behind the bed-curtain, and listened attentively. He desired to know all; and she, on her part, confessed all. "You will justify me when I am gone," she said. "Let him know that it was not my fault I did not die sooner. I did my best to have it all over as soon as possible. I took all the medicine they gave me into my mouth, but I never swallowed it unless they compelled me by watching me. In the night, when the watchers slept for a moment, I sat up in bed, so as to take cold. If I was told to take opium, I took too much. I tried every thing that could make me sicker. I pretended to be able to sleep only by lying on my stomach, and smothered my heart until I lost consciousness. I wanted to try every way to put myself to death!"

"Enough, Marguerite," said Paul, showing himself. "I know enough to save your life, and I will save it: you

will desire it, and we shall be happy. We will forget all that we have suffered. Show me the letter you were speaking about, and don't be afraid."

He gently took the letter, read it without emotion, cast it on the ground, and trod upon it. "That is an infamous letter!" he exclaimed. "It is an insult to my honor! What! I hold out my hand to her husband after the duel, accept his apologies, pardon him in his repentance, advise his marriage, and the reconciliation after marriage, all to deceive him, to get possession of his wife before himself, and abase myself in his opinion more than he abased himself in mine by his conduct towards you? Why, this woman is more insane than he, and her madness has nothing noble in it. It is the madness of a sick conscience, a false soul, a bad heart. I ought to hate her, for her object is not even blind passion. She hopes to punish me for the harsh advice I gave her, by forcing into my life what she thinks would become a piercing, eternal regret. Well, let me tell you what I would have done to such a woman if neither Jacques de Rivonnière, nor my aunt, nor you had ever existed. I would have gone to her rendezvous, and would have said to her on parting, 'Thanks, madame: to-morrow it will be the turn of some one else. I leave you without regret.' But to suppose that I would have an hour of intoxicating happiness with her at the price of my honor and your life! Ah, Marguerite, my poor dear child, you do not know me yet! Come, you shall know me. Meanwhile swear to me that you will get well, that you will live! Look at me! Do you not see in my eyes that you are, with my Pierre, the dearest things I have on earth?" He went to get the boy, and placed him in his mother's arms. "Look at

the treasure you have given me. Tell me if I cannot love the mother of that boy. Tell me if I can live without her. Let us suppose the worst. Suppose I have had a fancy for that foolish woman, whom you admired so much more than I, — would it be a great sacrifice to make for you, to reject that fancy as a foul and wicked thing? Would it require enormous courage to prefer to her my domestic happiness, and the noble devotion of a heart which would smother itself, as you say, out of love for me? No, no! do not smother it, — that noble heart which belongs to me! Suppose all that you will, Marguerite: admit that I am a fool, a vain dupe, a corrupt libertine, a traitor, — though I did not think I deserved such a supposition; but at least do not suppose that in seeing you long for death I would accept the shameful *happiness* which you would leave in my reach. Come, come!" said he, seeing a smile returning to her colorless lips, "arouse yourself from sickness and death, my poor wife, — my only, my true wife! Laugh with me at those, who, while pretending to be no one's, will fall perhaps to the baseness of being any one's. These strong characters are phantoms. The greatness to which they pretend is but dust. They crumble before the look of a sensible man. Let the beautiful marchioness become what she will, I will undertake no more to direct her mind. I even abdicate my position as her disinterested friend, which she imposed upon me. I will not reply to her: I will not see her. I give you here and now my word upon it, as seriously, as truthfully, as if I were for the second time joining myself to you in marriage. And I swear also that I am proud and happy in making this promise."

A week later, Marguerite, acquies-

cing in the commands of the doctor, and with a mind put forever at rest, was out of danger. Plans of travelling, in which my company was counted upon, were discussed: for my heart was no longer with Cesarine; it was with Paul and Marguerite. I made no reproach to Cesarine in regard to her conduct, and did not announce to her my intention of leaving her. That would have led to a conversation too excited and angry; and, after having loved her so much, I did not feel that I had courage for such a scene. She continued her care for her husband, assiduously and well. He was intoxicated with gratitude and hope. She was put forward as a model for all wives. She was making up for the heedless folly and excessive independence of her youth, by a submission to duty, and by serious efforts to do good, which brought her in so much the more reputation. She was arranging every thing to go and pass the autumn with her husband in the country.

Two evenings before the day fixed for the departure she wrote to Paul, "Be at your office at seven o'clock in the morning. I will come to take you." Paul showed me this note with a shrug of the shoulders, begged me to say nothing to Marguerite, and burned it, as he had burned the former note. I saw that he was a little nervous, that was all. He did not leave the house next day.

Fearing that Cesarine, deceived, and furious in consequence, could not restrain her passion, I undertook to watch her, wishing to render her that last service of preventing her from betraying herself. She went out at seven, and did not return until nine. Then she came in, but went away again, and came back at noon. She was intending to go to Latour's again,

after having breakfasted with her father; but I stopped her by saying, casually, that I was going to my nephew's, to see him.

"Is he very sick?" she cried, forgetting herself.

"He is not sick at all," I answered.

"I spoke to him about my book, and have written to him twice. Why didn't he answer? I would like to know, and I will go with you to see him."

"No," said I, "because there is nothing to be arranged about your book. He received both your letters, and did not wish to answer them. He burned them."

"And he showed them to you?"

"Yes."

"Also to Marguerite?"

"No."

"Is that all you have to tell me?"

"That is all."

"He wishes to quarrel with me, then. He has condemned me to blush before you! He believes that I will bear your censure!"

"You are not called upon to bear it. I am going to live with my relatives."

"It is well," said she, in a hard, dry tone, and went and shut herself in her room, from which she did not re-appear until evening.

I made my final preparations, and said good-by to M. Dietrich without allowing him to suspect any thing unusual. I took for a pretext a necessary absence of several months to complete the cure of my niece. We were at the Dietrich residence, where Cesarine had told her husband she intended to pass the day in order to prepare for her departure on the morrow. She left all the care of preparation to her Aunt Helmina; and after having been shut up in her room all the afternoon, under pretence of fatigue, came down to dine with us. She had wept so much, that

it was betrayed by her looks; and her father seemed anxious. She laid it all to the sorrow which she experienced in taking leave of the family mansion, and loaded us both with her tenderest caresses.

The next day, she set off alone with her husband; and I went to live in the Rue de Vaugirard. As I was leaving the Dietrich house, I was surprised to meet Bertrand, who saluted me with a ceremonious air.

"How?" said I. "Didn't you go with the marchioness?"

"No, mademoiselle," he replied: "I took leave of her this morning."

"Is it possible? Why?"

"Because she made me carry, day before yesterday, a letter which I did not approve."

"You know its contents, then?"

"Without opening it, which Mademoiselle will certainly not suppose I did, I could not know its contents. But from the manner in which M. Paul received it, and said in a short way that there was no answer, and from the persistency with which Madame la Marquise tried to find him yesterday at his office, from her mortification, and her anger, I saw, that, for the first time in her life, she had done an unworthy act, and that her confidence in me was beginning to degrade me. I asked to be discharged; but she refused, not supposing that a man so devoted as I have been to her could resist her. I insisted; which offended her very much. She taxed me with ingratitude; and I was forced to tell her that my discretion would prove to her my gratitude. Then she spoke more gently; but I was offended, and accordingly refused any increase of wages, and every other benefit she offered me."

I approved what he had done, and

entered my carriage, my heart full at seeing Cesarine so humiliated; but the tender greeting of my children effaced my sadness. We passed the summer at Vichy and in Auvergne, whence we brought back Marguerite completely cured, happy, and radiant with beauty, and little Pierre more robust and active than ever. I might state from my own observation, that Paul was happy, and that he thought of Cesarine only as he would of a romance, read with emotion, occupying a day of excitement, but coldly criticized on the morrow.

As for the beautiful marchioness, she re-appeared in society with great brilliancy the following winter. Her extravagance, her beauty, her wit, her parties, were the talk of the town. She was the most charming of women, and at the same time a woman of the first rank for goodness and intelligence. We alone, in our little tranquil corner, knew the vulnerable spot in that stout armor; but we said nothing about it outside, and talked on the subject very little among ourselves. Marguerite, notwithstanding her husband's severe opinion regarding this idol of hers, was always ready to defend and admire her. She could not forget that she owed the life of her son to "her beautiful marchioness." Paul did not interfere with this, a part of the religion of a tender and generous soul. As for myself, the absence of hate in her jealousy made me love Marguerite, and convinced me that it was not an idle boast, when she said, that, if she was the most simple and ignorant of us all, she was the most loving and devoted.

XXV.

I HAVE enjoyed relating this family history in my leisure moments. What will be Cesarine's future? Her

father and husband, whom I see sometimes, and who have made several vain efforts to draw me back to them, seem as kind as possible. She alone remains cold and distant, and has not made the slightest effort to restore our former footing of friendship. Perhaps she will change her mind by and by; but I do not desire it. The seven years which I passed with her were, if not the most painful, at least the most agitated of all my life.

For two years Paul has seen her but once; and this is the way he described the fortuitous meeting to me:—

"Yesterday, as I was at Fontainebleau on business, I made up my mind to take the opportunity to walk as far as the rocks of Avon. Returning by the wooded path along the Moret Road, wholly absorbed in my thoughts, I did not hear the approach of two horses, coming behind me in the sand. One of them literally ran me down, and would have thrown me over, if I had not, by a quick movement, caught hold of, and clung to his bridle. The noble brute, a magnificent animal by the way, did not want to trample upon me. He stopped of himself, when a vigorous blow of the whip from the intrepid amazon who was on his back made him rear, and brought his knees against my breast. I was not hurt, for I had time to leap to one side, still clinging to the bridle. 'Let me pass now, Monsieur Gilbert!' exclaimed a well-known voice, with a slightly disdainful accent. 'Pass, Madame la Marquise,' I replied coldly, with a bow which she did not return. She passed on like a flash of lightning, followed by her groom, leaving slightly in the rear the cavalier who accompanied her, and who was no other than the Viscount de Valbonne.

"He stopped, and stretched out his

hand. 'What!' he cried, 'is it you? I was hurrying to prevent you from being thrown down; for I saw a heedless pedestrian, who was not avoiding the most heedless equestrienne in the world. Do you know that a little more, and she would have run over you?'

"I do not let myself be run over," I replied. 'It is not to my liking.'

"Alas!" he replied, 'neither is it to mine. Good-by, my dear friend: I cannot let the marchioness return to the city alone.'

"And he went like the wind to rejoin her. I know all now."

"What! What do you know, my child?"

"I know that the poor viscount, rude as he is in manners and language, has taken my place as target for the eyes of the imperious Cesarine; that he has been less fortunate than I, and that she has *run over* him! I saw all that in his look, his accent, his few words, spoken with deep bitterness of spirit. She has made him expiate his hostility to her by a servitude which may last as long as that of the marquis; that is, for life. Rivonnière is happy enough. He thinks himself beloved; the world thinks so too. Valbonne is to be pitied. He betrays his friend; he is humiliated. He will perhaps come to a violent end, for he is a dark and mystical nature.

"Do you know, aunt," added Paul, "that that woman was near doing me a great injury? I can tell you so now. I was more smitten by her than I have ever confessed to you. I never betrayed it in her presence; but she saw it in spite of me; and that will explain to you the audacity of her avowals, and makes them, I will not say less culpable, but less impudent. Where should I be if I had not possessed a little moral courage? Did

she not place me on the brink of a precipice? If I was near losing my poor wife, was it not because, dazed and bewildered, I lacked penetration, and ignored the extent of her grief? No one is ever strong, believe me. Reproach me no more for my austerity to myself. If Marguerite had not been sublime in her madness, I should have been lost. I was letting her die, without seeing what was killing her. She had reason to be jealous. I had need to be impenetrable and unconquerable; for her heart, powerful by instinct, felt the giddiness of mine.

"All this is past, but not forgotten. The beautiful marchioness would have been very well pleased yesterday to see me roll ridiculously in the dust under her horse's feet. And I remember to say to myself every day, 'Never let your conscience be led astray by a hair's breadth.'"

To-day, the 5th August, 1866, Paul is the happy father of a little girl, as beautiful as her brother. M. Dietrich desired to be her godfather. Cesarine did not oppose, and so we guess that she was willing.

I may finish a story not about myself, by a few words personal. I have not lived so long a time, wholly engaged in looking out for others, without learning some useful lessons. I have made my mistakes too, and I confess them. The chief of these was in being sceptical for so long of the progress of which Marguerite was capable. Perhaps I had prejudices, which, in spite of myself, are attributable to a class of prejudices of birth or education. Thanks to the admirable character of Paul, Marguerite has become a lady so charming and so sociable, that I need no urging to call her my niece, and treat her as my daughter. The care of their children is my most pleas-

ant duty. I have replaced in that duty Madame Feron, whom we have placed in comparatively easy circumstances. As for ourselves, we find that we have enough for our few wants. We have contributed our little incomes to a common fund. I am giving a few lessons in the primary branches to some children. Paul's business prospers. Perhaps some day he will be richer than he expects to be now. It must be, as a necessary result of his orderly mind, his intelligence, and his activity; but we do not desire wealth, and, so far from urging him to seek it, we require him to take leisure, which we try to make pleasant to him.

THE
MARRIAGE OF MOIRA FERGUS

A NOVEL

BY

WILLIAM BLACK

AUTHOR OF "A DAUGHTER OF HETH," "STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A
PHAETON," "A PRINCESS OF THULE," ETC.

NEW YORK:
R. WORTHINGTON, 750 BROADWAY.
1879.

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WILLIAM F. GILL & COMPANY
1875

Trow's
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING Co.,
205-213 *East 12th St.,*
NEW YORK.

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THE MARRIAGE OF MOIRA FERGUS.

CHAPTER I.

MOIRA SEEKS THE MINISTER.

It was a gray day ; the skies were clouded over ; the Atlantic was sea-green and rough ; the rocky islands along the coast looked black in the driving sea. A young girl, with her shawl wrapped round her head and shoulders, had come all the way across the island of Darroch to the free church Manse on the western side, and now she timidly tapped at the door. She was a quiet little Highland girl, not very pretty, perhaps ; she was fair, freckled, and wistful of face, but she had a certain innocence and "strangeness" in her blue eyes that pleased people. Her name was Moira Fergus—Moireach Fearghus, some would have spelt it—and she was the eldest of a family of five, who all lived on the eastern shores of

Darroch, with their father, John Fergus.

She tapped at the door, and a stalwart middle-aged woman answered.

"Ay, iss it you, Moira, that I see here this day? and what will you be wanting to say to the minister?"

The girl seemed frightened ; but at last she managed to say that she wanted to see the minister alone. The Highland woman regarded her with some suspicion, but at length asked her to come in and sit down in the small parlor while she would go for Mr. MacDonald. The girl went into the room, and somewhat nervously sat down on one of the chairs. For several minutes she remained there alone, looking in an absent way at the big shells on the mantel-piece, and listening vaguely to the sea outside.

Then Mr. MacDónald appeared

—a small, thin, red-faced Celt, not very careful as to dress, and obviously partial to snuff.

“Kott pless me—and you, too, Moira Fergus,” said he. “And it wass no thought of seeing you that I had this day. And was there anything wrong now with your father that you hef come all the way from Ardtilleach?”

“No, Mr. MacDonald, there iss not anything the matter with my father,” said the girl, nervously working with the corner of her shawl. “There iss not anything the matter with my father, but—but—you know, Mr. MacDonald that it iss not every one that can get a smooth word from my father.”

“A smooth word?” said the minister. “And indeed it iss your father, Moira, that is the angriest man in all the islands, and there iss no sort of holding of his tongue. There are other men—yes, there are other men—who will be loose of their tongues on the week days, and they will speak of the teffle without much heed of it—and what iss the harm, too, if you will tam the teffle when you speak of him, and it will come to him all in good time; but to tam other people, and on the Sabbath, too, that iss a ferry different matter. The teffle—well, he is tammed what-effer; but how can you know that Mr. Ross of Styornoway, or Mr. Macleod of Harris iss in the black books?

But I will say no harm of your father, Moira Fergus.”

And, indeed, Mr. MacDonald had some cause to be silent; for—always excepting on Sundays, when he proved himself a most earnest and faithful shepherd—he was himself given to the use of strong language and a little strong drink. He was none the less respected by his flock that occasionally he worked himself into a passion and uttered phrases that would have driven the Free Church Synod into fits. On the Sundays, however, he always had a clean shirt, would touch no whiskey, and made use of no vehement language—unless that vehemence appeared in his Gaelic sermons, which were of the best of their kind.

“Oh, Mr. MacDonald,” the girl suddenly cried out, with a strange pleading in her eyes, “you will be a friend to me, and I will tell you why I hef come all the way from Ardtilleach. It wass Angus McEachran and me—you know Angus McEachran, Mr. MacDonald?—it was Angus McEachran and me—well, we were thinking of getting married—ay, it iss many a day since he hass talked of that—”

“Well, well, Moira, and what more? Is there any harm in it that a young man and a young lass should think of getting married?”

The girl still kept nervously

twitching away at the corner of her shawl.

"And there iss many a time I hef said to him, 'Angus, we will get married some day, but what for should we get married now, and the fishing not very good whatever?' And there iss many a time he hass said to me, 'Moira, you hef done enough for your father and your father's children, and if he will not let you marry, do you think, then, that you will never marry?'"

"Your younger sisters must be growing up, Moira," the minister said.

"And the days went by," the girl continued, sadly, "and the weeks went by, and Angus McEachran he wass ferry angry with me many a time, and many a time I hef said to him, 'Angus, you will be doing better if you will go away and get some other young lass to be your wife, for it will be a bad day the day I quarrel with my own people to come to you and be your wife.' And it iss many the night I hef cried about it—from the night to the morning; and it wass many a time I will wish that I had neffer seen him, and that he had neffer come down from the Lewis the year that the herring came round about Darroch and Killeena. And now—and now—"

Well, the girl burst into tears at this point, and the minister, not knowing well what to do, brought out a bottle of whiskey, and said:

"Now, Moira, be a good lass, and do not cry ass if you wass without friends in the world. What iss it now that iss the matter?"

"Well, Mr. Macdonald," the girl said, between her sobs, "it wass five days or four days ago that Angus came to me, and he said to me, 'Moira, it iss no more any use the trying to get married in Darroch, for your father he is a violent man, and he will not hear of it; and what we hef to do is to go away from Darroch, you and me together, and when the wedding is all over, then you can come back and tell your people.'"

"That wass not well spoken," said the minister. "It iss a bad day for a young lass when she hass to run away from her own people."

He was beginning to see the cause of the trouble that was visible on the fair young face.

"And I said to him," continued the girl, struggling to restrain her tears, "I said to him, 'it iss a hard thing you ask, Angus McEachran, but it iss many a long day and many a long month you hef waited for me to marry you, as I said I would marry you; if it iss so that there will be no chance of our getting married in Darroch, I will go away with you.' Then he said, 'Moira, I will find out about a boat going up to the Lewis, and if they will put us ashore at Borvabost, or Barvas, or Callernish, we will walk

across the island to Styornoway, and there we will get the boat to tek us to Glassgow.'"

"To Glassgow!" cried the minister. "Wass you thinking of going to Glassgow, Moira Fergus?"

The girl looked rather abashed.

"And do you not know what an ahfu' place is Glassgow—ay, indeed, an ahfu' place," said the minister, earnestly. "No, you do not know—but I hef been more as three times or two times in Glassgow—and for a young lass to go there! You do not know, Moira Fergus, that it iss filled, every street of it, with wild men that hef no more care for the sabbath-day as if it wass Tuesday, ay, or even Monday—and the sodgers there—and the Roman Catholics—and no like the Catholics that you will see, one of them, or two of them, about Locahbar, where they are ferry like good, plain, other people—but it iss the *Roman* Catholics, Moira—it iss the real *Roman* Catholics, Moira—you will find in Glassgow, and they are ferry wild men, and if they were to rise against the town in the night-time, it would be the Lord's own mercy if they did not burn every person in his bed. Indeed, indeed, Moira Fergus, you must not go to Glassgow!"

"And I do not want to go to Glassgow!" Moira said, excitedly, "that iss what I hef come to you about this day, Mr. MacDonald. I hef a great fear of going to Glass-

gow, and I wass saying to myself that it wass you, Mr. MacDonald, that maybe could help me—and if you wass to see Angus McEachran—"

"But if I was to see your father, Moira Fergus, there is no man so mad ass not to know that a young lass will be thinking of getting married."

"That will be of no use whateffer, Mr. MacDonald. It iss a ferry angry man he is, and if there iss any more word of the marriage I will be afraid to go back to Ardtilleach."

"Then the teffle—and tam him!—hass got into his head!" said the minister, with a furious blow on the table. "It iss no patience I hef with a foolish man!"

Moira was rather frightened, but she said in a low voice—

"Ay, ay, it iss a ferry angry man he is; and there iss no use going to him, Mr. MacDonald; but this iss what I wass thinking, Mr. MacDonald, if you wass being so kind ass to go to Angus McEachran, and tell him that it iss not a good thing for us to go away to Glassgow. I hef given my word to him—yes, and I will not draw back from that—but now I hef a great fear of going to Glassgow—"

The minister was during this time shifting rather uneasily from the table to the window and from the window to the table. He was

evidently much excited; he seemed scarcely to hear what the girl was saying. At last he suddenly interrupted her.

"Listen to me, Moira Fergus. it iss no business of mine—no, it iss not any business of mine—as a minister, to interfere in the family affairs of eny one whateffer; and you had no right to come to the minister and ask him to go and speak to Angus McEachran. No, you had no right; and yet, I will say this, Moira Fergus, that you had a ferry good right—ay, the teffle is in it if you had not a ferry good right. For I am a natif of this island—well, it wass in Harris I wass born, but what's the use of being ferry particular?—and I am a natif of this island as well as a minister, and I hef known your family for a great many years, and I hef known you to be a good lass—and—and this iss what I wass going to say to you, that, before I will see you going away to Glassgow I will marry you and Angus McEachran myself, ay, so that no one shall know of it until it is all ferry well over. And what do you say to that, Moira Fergus?"

The girl started, flushed, and then looked timidly down.

"It iss a ferry good main you are, Mr. MacDonald," she said, hesitatingly, "and a ferry good friend you hef always been to me—but—but it iss not for me to say

that I hef come to ask you to marry us; and it is Angus McEachran, Mr. MacDonald, and not me, that hass to say 'yes' or 'no' to that."

"Ay, ay!" said the minister, cheerfully and courageously, "it is no fault for a young lass to be shy; and it iss right what you hef said, Moira, that I will speak to Angus McEachran. And there iss another, I will speak to about it, for it iss no trifling matter, Moira, and I will hef to see that we are sure and safe in what hass to be done; and you know that there iss not any one about the islands that hass trafeled so far ass Mr. Mackenzie; of Borva; and it iss a great many things he will know, and I think I will go and say a word to him, Moira."

"It iss a long way, the way to Borva, Mr. MacDonald."

"Well, I wass told by Alister Lewis that the men of the Nighean-dubh were coming up from Taran-say about one o'clock or twelve o'clock to-morrow's morning, and if it iss not ferry pad weather they will go on to Loch Roag, so I think I will go back with the Nighean-dubh. Now you will go to Ardtilleach, Moira Fergus, and you will say not a word to any one until the time wass come I will be speaking myself to Angus McEachran; and now you will take a tram, Moira, for it is a ferry coarse sort o' day, and a healthy young lass will hef no harm from a drop of good whiskey."

"You are ferry kind, Mr. MacDonald, but I do not touch the whiskey."

"No? Then I will hef a drop myself, to wish you good luck, Moira; and when I come back from Borvabost, then I will tell you what Mr. Mackenzie says, and you will keep up your spirits, Moira, and you will find no need to go away from your own people to be married in Glassgow."

When Moira Fergus went outside a new light seemed to fill the world. Certainly the sea was green and rough, and there were huge white breakers heaving over on the black rocks. But it seemed to her that there was a sort of sunshine in the green of the sea; and she had a consciousness of sunshine being behind the gray clouds overhead; and the dull brown moorland—mile after mile of it, in low undulation—was less lonely than when she had crossed it an hour before. And that red-faced irascible little minister, who lived by himself in the solitary manse out by the sea, and who was just a trifle too fond of whiskey and fierce language during six days of the week, was to her as a bright angel come down from heaven with promises of help, so that the girl, as she thought of the future, did not know whether to laugh or to cry for joy.

CHAPTER II.

A VISIT TO GREAT PEOPLE.

"THE teffle—and tam him —is in the carelessness of you, Alis-er-nan-Each!" cried the minister, catching up his coat tails. "What for will you knock your fish against my coat, and me going up to see Mr. Mackenzie and his daughter, that iss ass good ass an English lady now?"

Alister made a humble apology to the minister, and took his own bonnet to remove any lingering traces of the Nighean-dubh from the minister's costume, and then Mr. MacDonald got ashore at Borvabost. He had a word or two to say to some of the people whom he knew; then he went up and over the hill to the house of a certain Mr. Mackenzie, who was called by some folks the "King of Borva."

"And iss Mr. Mackenzie in the house, Mairi?" said he to the young girl who came to the passage—the doors in this part of the world are kept shut against rain, but never against strangers.

"No," said she, "Mr. MacDonald, he iss not in Borva at all, but away over at Styornoway, and it is ferry sorry he will be that you came to Borva and him away from his own house. But there is Miss Sheila, she will be down at her own house; and she will be ferry ill pleased that

you will come to Borva if you will **not** call at her house."

"Oh, I will call at her house; and **it** is ferry glad I am that she has **not** gone away as yet; and I am **glad** to see that you are still with **Mr. Mackenzie, Mairi.**"

The old minister, grumbling over his disappointment, set out once more, and walked away across the moorland and down to a plateau over a quiet bay, where there was a large stone house built, with a veranda and a flower-garden in front. He saw there a young lady watering the tree-fuchsias—a handsome, healthily-complexioned young woman, with dark hair and deep-blue eyes, who was the daughter of Mr. Mackenzie. She was rather well liked by the islanders, who generally called her "Miss Sheila," notwithstanding that she was married; although some of them had got into a shy, half-comical, half-tender fashion of calling her "Princess Sheila," merely because her husband had a yacht so named.

"And are you ferry well?" said she, running forward, with a bright smile on her face, to the minister. "And hef you come all the way from Darroch, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Ay, ay," said the minister, a little embarrassed, and looking down, "I hef come from Darroch; and it iss a proud day this day that I will shake hands with you, Miss—Mrs.

Laffenter; and it iss ferry glad I am that I will come to Borva, although your father is not here, for it iss not effery time in the year that a stranger will see you, Mrs. Laffenter."

"Oh, but you are no stranger, Mr. MacDonald," said this Mrs. Lavender. "Now, come into the house, and I will ask you to stay and have some dinner with us, Mr. MacDonald, for you cannot leave for Darroch again to-night. And what did you want to see my father about, Mr. MacDonald?"

He followed her into the house, and sat down in a spacious sitting-room, the like of which, in its wonderful colors and decorations, he had never seen before. He could compare it only with Stornoway Castle, or his dreams of the palace in which the Queen lived in London.

Well, he told all the story of Moira Fergus and Angus McEachran to Mrs. Lavender, and said that he had come to ask the advice of her father, who was a man who had travelled much and amassed knowledge.

"Surely you yourself are the best judge," said the handsome young wife. "They have lived long enough in the parish, hef they not, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Oh, that iss not it—that iss not the matter at all, Mrs. Laffenter!" said he, emphatically. "I can marry

them—oh, yes, I know I can marry them—in my own house, if I like. But it iss the prudence—it iss the prudence, Mrs. Laffenter—of it that iss in the question ; and I am not sure of the prudence of it.”

“Then I must ask my husband,” said Sheila.

She went to the open window, took a whistle from her pocket, and blew a note loud and shrill, that seemed to go echoing far across Loch Roag, away amid the blue and misty solitudes of the great Suain-abhal. She stood there for a minute or two. Far below her there was a schooner yacht resting quietly in the bay ; she could see a small boat put off and land on the shore a man and a very tiny boy. The man was clad in rough blue homespun. He set the child of three or so on his shoulder, and then proceeded to climb the hill. In a few minutes there was the sound of some one on the gravel outside, and presently a tall young man, somewhat heavily bearded, marched into the drawing-room, and threw the child into its mother’s outstretched arms.

“Mr. MacDonald, of Darroch ?” he cried.

“Why, of course ! And haven’t you got such a thing as a glass of whiskey in the house, Sheila, when a visitor comes all the way from Darroch to see you ? And what’s the best of your news, Mr. MacDonald ?”

Sheila—or Mrs. Lavender, as one ought to call her—having deposited the very young gentleman on the sofa, and given him a mighty piece of cake to console him for maternal neglect, proceeded to tell her husband of the causes of Mr. MacDonald’s visit. His decision on the point was quickly taken.

“You’ll get yourself into trouble, Mr. MacDonald, if you help them to a clandestine marriage. I wouldn’t touch it, if I were you.”

“Yes, I am afraid you will get yourself into trouble,” said Sheila, with an air of wisdom.

“But, Kott pless me ! said the minister, indignantly, “hef I not told you they will run away to Glasgow, and not one of them married until they get there ?”

“Well, there’s something in that.” said Mr. Lavender. “What sort of fellow is this Angus McEachran !”

“Oh, he is a very diligent young man—he hass a share in the boat, and he hass some money in the bank, and there iss none more cleffer than he is at the fishing. Ay, ay, he is a cleffer young man, and a good-looking young man ; but if he wass not so free with his laugh, and his joke, and his glass—well, I will say nothing against the young man, who is a ferry respectable young man, whateffer, and there iss no reason why John Fergus should shut the door against him.”

“Then can’t the father be talked

over ? " said Mr. Lavender, pretending to snatch at the cake which his son was busily eating.

" Oh, couldn't I say something to him ! " Sheila said, with entreaty in her eyes.

" You, Miss — Mrs. Laffenter ! " said the minister, with surprise. " You, to go into John Fergus' house ! Yes, indeed, it would be a proud day the day for him that you went into his house — ay, if he wass fifteen or a dozen John Ferguses. But you hef no imagination of that man's temper — and the sweerin of him ! — "

" Oh, I should stop that, " said Mr. Lavender. " If you would like to go and talk to him, Sheila, I will undertake that he sha'n't swear much ! "

" How could you know ? " the girl said, with a laugh. " He would swear in the Gaelic. But if there is no other means, Mr. MacDonald, I am sure anything is better than letting them run away to Glassgow. "

" Sheila, " said the husband, " when do we go to London ? "

" In about a week now we shall be ready, I think, " she said.

" Well, look here. You seem interested in that girl — I don't remember her having been here at all. However, suppose we put off our going to London, and see these young folks through their troubles ? "

Of course he saw by her face that that was what she wanted : he had

no sooner suggested such a thing than the happiest light possible sprang to her eyes.

" Oh, will you ? " she cried.

" And in for a penny, in for a pound, " said he. " I suppose you want witnesses, Mr. MacDonald ? What if my wife and myself went round in the yacht to Darroch, and helped you at your private wedding ? "

" Hey ? " said Mr. MacDonald with his eyes staring. " You, Sir, come to the wedding of Moira Fergus ? And Miss Sheila, too ? Why, there iss no man in all the islands would not gif away his daughter — ay, twenty daughters — if he wass told you will be coming to the wedding — not any man but John Fergus ; and there is the anger of the teffle himself in the nature of John Fergus ; and it iss no man will go near him. "

" But I will go near him ! " said Sheila, proudly, " and he will speak no rough speech to me. "

" Not if I can understand him, and there is a door handy, " said her husband, with a laugh.

" Ay, ay, you will come to the wedding ? " said the minister, almost to himself, as if this assurance were almost too much for mortal man to bear. He had made a long and disagreeable voyage from the one island to the other, in order to seek the advice of a capable man ; but he had not expected such high and

honorable sanction of his secret aims. Now, indeed, he had no more hesitation. Mr. Mackenzie was a wise man and a travelled man, no doubt; but not even his counsel could have satisfied the old minister as did the prompt and somewhat reckless tender of aid on the part of Mr. Lavender, and the frank and hearty sympathy of the beautiful "Princess Sheila."

CHAPTER III.

A MEETING OF LOVERS.

A STILL, calm night lay over the islands; there was no sound abroad but the occasional calling of the wild fowl; in the perfect silence there was scarcely even a murmur from the smooth sea. Night, as it was, the world was all lit up with a wonderful white glory; for the moon down there in the south was almost full; and here the clear radiance fell on the dark moorland flats, on the bays of white sand fronting the sea, and on the promontories of black rock that jutted out into the shining water. Killeena lay cold and silent under the wan glare; Darroch showed no signs of life; the far mountains of the larger islands seemed visionary and strange. It was a night of wonderful beauty, but that the unusual silence of the sea had something awful in it; one had a sense that the mighty plain of water was perhaps stealthily ris-

ing to cover forever those bits of rock which, during a few brief centuries, had afforded foothold to a handful of human beings.

Down in one of the numerous creeks a young man was idly walking this way and that along the smooth sand—occasionally looking up to the rocks above him. This was Angus McEachran, the lover of Moira Fergus. There was obviously nothing Celtic about the young man's outward appearance: he was clearly of the race descended from the early Norwegian settlers in these islands—a race that, in some parts, has, notwithstanding intermarriage, preserved very distinct characteristics. He was a tall young fellow, broad-chested, yellow-bearded, good-looking enough, and grave and deliberate of speech. Moreover, he was a hard-working, energetic, shrewd-headed youth; there was no better fisherman round these coasts; he had earned his share in the boat, so that he was not at the mercy of any of the curers; he had talked of building a small stone cottage for himself; and it was said that he had a little money in the bank at Styornoway. But if Angus McEachran was outwardly a Norseman, he had many of the characteristics of the Celtic temperament. He was quick to imagine and resent affront. His seeming gravity of demeanor would, under provocation of circumstances, disappear altogether.

er ; and there was no one madder than he in the enjoyment of a frolic, no one more generous in a fit of enthusiasm, no one more reckless in the prosecution of a quarrel. They said he sometimes took a glass too much on shore—led away by the delight of good fellowship ; but the bitterest cold night, the most persistent rain, the most exhausting work, could not tempt him to touch a drop of whiskey when he was out at the fishing.

A young girl, shawled over, came over the rocks, and made her way down to the sands.

“ You are ferry late, Moira,” said he. “ I was thinking you wass not coming at all the night.”

“ It is not an easy thing for me to get away, that no one will know,” said she, timidly.

“ Ay, ay, and that is the worst of it !” said he, bitterly. “ It is no ferry good thing that you will hef to come away from the house like that, as if you wass a thief ; and if it wass any other young lass, she would not hef suffered that so long ; and now, Moira, this is what I hef to say to you—that you must do what you hef promised to do, and when we go to Glassgow—”

“ Oh, Angus !” she said ; it iss not to Glassgow I can go—”

Even in the pale moonlight she could see the quick look of surprise, and anger, and jealousy that lept to his eyes.

“ And you will not go to Glassgow ?” said he.

“ Angus !” the girl said, “ it iss ferry much I hef to say to you, and you will not be angry with me until I tell you. And it wass yesterday I went over to Mr. MacDonald, and I wass saying to him that there wass no more use in trying to speak to my father, and that you and me, Angus, we were thinking of going away to Glassgow—”

“ And it iss a foolish lass you are !” he said, impetuously, “ and now he will come over to Ardtilleach—”

“ He will not think of coming over to Ardtilleach ; it iss ferry kind man that Mr. McDonald is ; and he will say to me, ‘ Moira, will it not be petter, and a great deal petter, that I will marry Angus McEachran and you in Darroch, and no one will know until it iss over, and then you can go and tell your father ?’ ”

“ Ay, did he say that ?” exclaimed the young man, with his eyes wide open.

“ Indeed he did.”

“ Ay, ay, and it iss a ferry good man he iss whateffer,” said Angus, with a sudden change of mood. And you, Moira, what wass it you will say to him ?”

“ Me ?”

“ Ay, you ?”

“ Well,” said the girl, looking down, but with some pride in her tone ; “ it is not for a young lass to

say yes or to say no about such a thing—it is for you, Angus, to go to the minister. But this is what I hef said to him, that the going to Glassgow wass a great trouble—to me —ay, and a ferry great trouble—”

“Then I will go and see Mr. MacDonald!” said Angus, hastily. “And this iss what I will say to him—that he iss a ferry good man, and that before three weeks is over, ay, or two weeks or four weeks, I will send to him a gallon of whiskey the like of which he will not find from the Butt of Lewis down to Barra Head. Ay, Moira, and so you went all the way across the island yesterday? It iss a good lass you are; and you will be ferry much petter when you are married and in your own house, and away from your father, that hass no petter words for his own children ass if they wass swines. And it iss ferry early the morn’s mornin’ that I will go over to Mr. MacDonald—”

“But you need not do that, Angus,” the girl said, “for Mr. MacDonald has gone away to Borva, to ask the advice of Mr. Mackenzie. Yes, it is a great deal that Mr. MacDonald is doing for us.”

“It will be the good whiskey he will hef from me!” muttered Angus to himself.

“And now, Angus, I will be going back, for my father he thinks I hef, only gone over to get a candle

from Mrs. McLachlan; and you will say nothing about all that I hef told you, only you will go over to Mr. MacDonald, Angus, on Saturday or Friday, and you will speak to him. And I will say good-night to you, Angus.”

“I will go with you, Moira, along a bit of the road.”

“No, Angus,” the girl said, anxiously, “if there wass any one would see us, and will take the story to my father.”

She had no need to complete the sentence. Her companion laughed lightly and courageously as he took her hand.

“Ay, ay, Moira, and it is not always that you will hef to be afrait. And the story they will hef to take to your father, that will be a ferry goot story, that will be the ferry best story he will ever hear. Oh yes, he will say three words or two words to effery-pody around him when he hears that teffle of a story.”

If Angus was inclined to make light of the old man’s probable rage, his sweetheart was not. The mere mention of it seemed to increase her desire to depart; and so he kissed her, and she went on her way home.

Perhaps he would have grumbled at the shortness of the interview, but that this new project had almost taken his breath away, and now wholly occupied his mind. He

clambered up the rocks, got across to the road, and slowly walked along in the clear moonlight, in the direction of the cottages of Ardtilleach. To have a lovers' meeting cut short on such a night would have been grievous under other circumstances ; but that was forgotten in the suggestion that his marriage with Moira Fergus had now become possible and near.

Angus McEachran had never been to Glasgow, and he had the vague fear of the place which dwells in the minds of many islanders. The project of flight thither was a last and desperate resource after all hope of conciliating John Fergus was abandoned. But the young man had never felt so confident about it as he pretended to be in speaking to Moira Fergus. He knew nothing of how the people lived in Glasgow ; of the possibility of two strangers getting married ; of the cost of the long journey. Then he might have to leave his fishing for an indefinite period, and embarrass his comrades in the boat ; he had a suspicion, too, that old John Fergus having been robbed of his daughter would appeal to the sheriff, and impound the money which he, Angus McEachran, had in the bank at Styornoway.

It was with great joy, therefore, that he heard of this proposal. It seemed so much more fitting and proper for a man and a woman to

get married in their own island. There would be no stain on the fair name of Moira Fergus if she was married by Mr. MacDonald himself ; whereas no one knew anything about the character of the Glasgow clergymen, who might, for all one knew, be secretly Roman Catholics. And then there was the remote chance that the wedding would have the august approval of the far-known Mr. Mackenzie, the King of Borva, which would silence the most censorious old hag who ever croaked over a peat-fire.

Angus McEachran reached the long and straggling line of hovels and cottages known as the fishing hamlet of Ardtilleach. Down there, on the white shores of the small creek several of the boats were drawn up, their hulls black in the moonlight. Up on the rocks above were built the two long and substantial curing-houses, with plenty of empty barrels lying round the doors. There was scarcely any one about, though here and there the smoke from a chimney showed that the peats were being stirred within to light up the gloomy interior of the hut. He passed the rude little cottage in which John Fergus and his family lived.

" Ay, ay, Moira, " he was thinking to himself, " you will have a better house to live in by and by, and you will have better treatment in the house, and you will be the mis-

tress of the house. And there will no one then say a hard word to you, whether he is your father or whether he is not your father ; and I will make it a bad day for any one that says a hard word to you, Moira Fergus."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOOD NEWS.

ANGUS MCEACHRAN hung his head in a sheepish fashion when he stood before the Minister. The stalwart, yellow-bearded young fisherman found it was not an easy thing to have to speak about marriage, and the proposal to give Mr. MacDonald a gallon of the best whisky had gone clean out of his head—banished, perhaps, by an instinctive reverence for spiritual authority. The little, red-faced Minister regarded him sternly.

"It was not well done of you, Angus McEachran," said he, "to think of running away to Glassgow with John Fergus's daughter."

"And whose fault wass that, Mr. MacDonald?" said the fisherman. "It wass the fault of John Fergus himself."

"Ay, ay, but you would hef made bad things worse. Why to Glassgow! Do you know what Glassgow is? No, you do not know; but you would hef found out what it iss to go to Glassgow! It wass a ferry goot thing that Moira Fergus had

the goot sense to come ofer to me and now, ass I tell you, we will try satisfy effery one if you will come ofer on the Wednesday morning."

"It wass ferry kind of you, Mr. MacDonald, to go all the way to Borva to ask apout the marriage; I will neffer forget that, neffer at all. And I will tell you this, Mr. MacDonald, that it wass no great wish I effer had for the gowing to Glassgow; for when a man gets married, it is but right he should hef his friends apout him, for a tance and a song. And it wass many a time I hef peen thinking, when I first became acquent with Moira Fergus, that we would hef a ferry goot wedding, and hef a tance and a tram; and it wass Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, said to me the other day, 'Angus,' says he, 'do you think of getting married? And when you are married,' says he, 'my wife and me will come and trink a glass to you and Moira Fergus.' And now, Mr. MacDonald, there will be no wedding at all—and not a single tance—or a tram—and no one to be there and be quite sure that we are married."

Angus McEachran had become rather excited, and had blundered into eloquence. It was, indeed, a sore point with the young fisherman that Moira and he were to be deprived of the great merry-making in the life of a man or woman. They would be married in a corner, with

joyous crowd of witnesses, no fire of the pipes, no whiskey, no dancing or reels under the midnight moon.

"And you will not think, Mr. MacDonald," said he, returning to his ordinary grave and shy demeanor. "that I hef no thanks for you, although we will hef no goot wedding. That is not any potty's fault but the fault of John Fergus; and when I will go to tell John Fergus that his daughter is married—"

"You will not go to tell John Fergus that, Angus McEachran," said the minister. "It is another that will tell John Fergus. It is Miss Sheila Mackenzie, that iss Mrs. Laffenter now, that will be coming to tek the news to John Fergus."

The minister spoke proudly. He was vain of his acquaintance with great people. He had, indeed reserved this piece of news until he saw fit to overwhelm his visitor with it.

The young fisherman uttered an exclamation in the Gaelic; he could scarcely believe what he heard.

"Iss it Miss Sheila Mackenzie will be coming all the way from Borva to the marriage of Moira Fergus?" he said, with his eyes full of wonder.

"Ay, and her husband, too" said the minister proudly. "Ay, and they are coming with their schooner yacht, and eight men aboard of

her, to say nothing of Mrs. Patterson's boy. And you were saying, Angus McEachran, there would be no one at your wedding. Oh no, there will be no one at your wedding! It will be only Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter that will be at your wedding."

Angus could not reply to this deadly sarcasm; he was lost in astonishment. Then he suddenly said, snatching up his cap:

"I am going, Mr. MacDonald, to tek the news to Moira Fergus."

"Wait a minute, it iss a ferry great hurry you are in, Angus," said the minister. "You need not be afrait that any one will tek the news before yourself. There iss many things we hef to settle about first—"

"But I will come ofer to-night again," said the fisherman—he was impatient to carry this wonderful news to Moira.

"Then there iss the teffle in your hurry, Angus McEachran!" said the minister, angrily. "You will come ofer again to-night? You will not come ofer again to-night! Do you think you can waste the days and the nights in running about Darroch, when it iss to Styornoway you hef to go, for the ring, and the money, and all that I hef told you."

The fisherman stood abashed; he put his cap on the table, and was content to receive his instructions with patience.

But when he went out and got a

safe distance from the house he suddenly tossed his cap high in the air.

"Hey!" he cried aloud, "here iss the good news for Moira Fergus!"

He laughed to himself as he sped rapidly across the Moorland. It was a fine, bright morning; the sun was warm on the heather and the white rocks; now and again he saw before him a young grouse walk coolly across the dusty road. He took little notice, however, of anything around him. It was enough that the fresh air and the sunlight seemed to fill his lungs with a sort of laughing-gas. Never before had he walked so rapidly across the island.

The consequence was that he reached Ardtilleach about 12 o'clock.

"Now," said he to himself, "the girls will be at the school, and old John Fergus will be up at the curing-house, and what if Moira Fergus be all by herself at home?"

The news he had gave him so much courage that he did not spy about; he walked straight up to John Fergus' cottage, and, stooping, passed in. Sure enough, there was Moira, and alone. She was seated near the fire, and was cleaning and chopping up some vegetables for the big iron pot that stood beside her. When she recognized Angus McEachran, she uttered a little cry of surprise, then she hastily jumped to her feet, and beat the parings out of her lap. But the young fisherman was not offended by the untidy

scraps of carrot and turnip that clung to her apron; he was the rather pleased to see that she was chopping up those vegetables very neatly—and he knew, for many a time he had had to make broth for himself.

"And are you not afrait, Angus, to come into this house?" she asked, anxiously.

"No, I am not afrait!" said he. "For I hef the good news for you—ay, ay, I hef the good news for you this day, Moira—"

"Iss it my father—?"

"No, no!" said he. "It iss nothing of your father. I will not ask your father for anything, not if he wass to live for sixty years, ay, and twenty years mirover. But I wass ofer to see Mr. MacDonald this morning—ay, I set out ferry soon, for I heard last night he wass come back from Borva—and this morning I wass with him for a ferry long time. And now it iss all settled, Moira, my lass, and this ferry night I will be going away to Styornoway to buy the ring, Moira, and get some money out of the bank, and other things. And Mr. MacDonald, he will say to me, 'Angus, you will hef to go and ask Moira Fergus to tell you the day she will be married, for effery young lass hass a right to that;' but I hef said to him, 'Mr. Macdonald, there iss no use for that; for it wass next Wednesday in the next week we

wass to go away to Glassgow to be married: and that iss the day that iss fixed already'—and so, Moira, it iss Wednesday of the next week you will be reaty to go ofer—and—and—and is there anything wrong with you, Moira Fergus?"

He offered her his hand to steady her; she was rather pale, and she trembled. Then she sat down on the wooden stool again and turned her eyes to the floor.

"And it is not very glad you are that the wedding iss near?" said he with some disappointment.

"It is not that, Angus McEachran," she said, in a low voice. "It is that—I am afrait—and it is a ferry terrible thing to go away and be married all by yourself—and no friend with you—"

"No friend?" said he with sudden joy: if this was all her doubt, he would soon remove it. "Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, you hef not heard all the news. There will be no one to come to your wedding? Do you know this, Moira, that it is Miss Sheila Mackenzie, and her husband that iss an Englishman, and they are both coming to your wedding—ay, in that fine poat that iss the most peautiful poat that wass ever come in to Styornoway harbor—and who iss it in all this island that hass Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter come to her wedding—tell me that, Moira Fergus!"

Well, when Moira heard that

Sheila Mackenzie and her husband were coming all the way from Borva to be present at her wedding, she burst into a fit of crying, and even the young man beside her understood what that meant.

"Ay, ay," said he, "it iss a very great deal the rich and grand people can do for the poor people when it iss in their mind to do it, and it would be a bad day for the poor people of Borva the day that Miss Sheila would go away altogether to London: but there is no fear of that now; and she is coming to your wedding, Moira, and it iss not pecause she is ferry rich and ferry grand that you will be proud of that, but I hef seen that you wass sore put about that there will be no woman at all at the wedding, and now here is one, and one that iss known through all the islands—and it is nothing to cry about, Moira Fergus."

"No, it iss nothing to cry about," said the girl, "only—it iss a ferry great kindness—and I will not know what to say—ay, are you quite sure they are coming all the way to Darroch, Angus?"

"Indeed there iss more than that to tell you, Moira; for it iss Mrs. Laffenter will be for coming to Ardtilleach to speak to your father as soon as the wedding is over—"

"What do you say, Angus McEachran?" the girl said, suddenly rising. "Hef you no sense to let her speak of such a thing? You

will know what a man my father iss when he iss angry : and it iss you and me that will hef to take his anger, not a stranger that hass done us a great kindness ; and it iss very thoughtless of you, Angus, to hef let Miss Sheila speak of that—”

“ Moira, what are you thinking of ? he said. “ When wass it that I hef seen Miss Sheila, and her away at Borva ? It wass the minister, he wass speaking to both Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter, both of the two of them together, and it wass Miss Sheila herself will want to see your father sure enough and mirover ! ”

The girl said nothing in reply for a sudden fear had fallen over her ; a shadow darkened the doorway. Angus McEachran half instinctively turned round—there was John Fergus staring at him with an anger which for the moment could not express itself in words. Moira's father was almost a dwarf in stature ; but he was broad-chested, bandy-legged, and obviously of great physical strength. He had a hard, grey, and sullen face, piercing black eyes under bushy gray eye-brows, thin lips, and square jaw.

“ Ay, it iss you, Angus McEachran,” said he, still blocking up the doorway, as if to prevent escape ; it wass a true word they will bring me that you will be for going into my house. And what iss it that will bring you to my house ? ”

“ It iss not a ferry friendly man

you are, John Fergus,” said the tall young sailor, rather gloomily, “ that you will say such things. And what iss the harm that one man will go into another man's house, and both of them neighbors together—”

“ Ay, this iss the harm of it ! ” said John Fergus, giving freer vent to his rage. “ You wass thinking that the lasses were at the school ; and you wass thinking that I wass away ofer at Killeena with the new oars ; and then you wass coming about the house—like a thief that will watch a time to come apout the house—that wass the harm of it, Angus McEachran.” The younger man's face grew rather darker, but he kept his temper down.

“ I am no thief, John Fergus. If it wass any other man than yourself will say such a thing to me—”

“ No, you are no thief,” said the father, with sarcastic emphasis, “ you will only come about the house when there iss effery one away from it but a young lass, and you will think there iss some whiskey in the house—”

The younger man burst into a bitter laugh.

“ Whiskey ! Iss it whiskey ? I hef come after the whiskey ! indeed and mirover that would be a fine day the day I tasted a glass of your whiskey ; for there iss no man alive in Darroch, or in Killeena, too, that effer had a glass of whiskey from you, John Fergus ! ”

At this deadly insult the elder man, with something of an inarticulate cry of rage, darted forward, and would have seized his opponent had not Moira thrown herself between them.

"Father," the trembling girl said, putting her hands on his breast, "keep back—keep back for a minute, and I will tell—indeed it was not the whiskey that Angus McEachran will come for—it was a message there was from Miss Sheila Mackenzie—and he will hear of it from the minister—and he will come into the house for a minute—and there was no harm in that. It is your own house, father—you will not harm a man in your own house—"

He thrust her aside.

"Angus McEachran," said he, "this is what I will say to you—you was saying to yourself this many a day back that you will marry this lass here. I tell you now, by Kott, you will not marry her not this year, nor the next year, nor many a year after that. And there is more as I have to say to you. This house is no house for you; and if it is any day I will come in to the house and you will be here, it will be a bad day that day for you, by Kott."

"That is very well said," retorted the younger man, whose eyes were afire, but who kept himself outwardly calm, "and this

is what I will say to you, John Fergus. That day may come to you that you will be very glad for me to come into your house, and you will be very sore in your heart that you were saying such things to me this day. And I will say this to you, do you think it is the fighting will keep me out of the house? Was you thinking I was afraid of you? By Kott, John Fergus, two men like you would not make me afraid; and that day will be a bad day for you that you took to fighting me."

The girl was once more for interfering with her entreaties.

"No, Moira," said her lover, "stand back—I am for no fighting—if there is fighting it is not in a man's own house that is the place for fighting. But this is what I will say to you, John Fergus, that you have no need to fear that I will come to your house. No, not if I was living for thirty years, or twenty years, in Ardtilleach will I come into your house—never, as I am a living man."

And that vow he kept.

CHAPTER V.

THE WEDDING.

THE Princess Sheila lay at her moorings in the bay; and the morning sunlight shone on her tall and shapely masts and on the gleaming

white decks. It was a lonely part of the coast of Darroch ; there was not another vessel on the smooth plain of the sea ; far away in the direction of some rocks a couple of seals were alternately raising their heads above the water—like the black head of a man—as if in wonder over this invasion of their silent haunts. Beautiful, indeed, was the morning of Moira Fergus' marriage. The water around the shore was so calm and so clear that one could distinguish the sand and the white starfish at an extraordinary depth. The sea was of a light blue, fading into gray, at the horizon. The sky was of a darker blue : and the almost motionless clouds dappled the sunlit shoulders of the hills and the wide expanse of the moorland.

About 10 o'clock a pinnacle put off from the yacht, and the quiet bay echoed the sound of the row-locks as the four sturdy seamen pulled into the land. They ran her by the side of some loose stones that served for a rude landing-jetty ; and then Mr. and Mrs. Lavender stepped on shore. The former was certainly not in proper wedding attire, for he had on his ordinary boating suit of blue homespun ; but the young lady wore a yachting costume which had been designed by her husband, and which was the wonder of all the islands around. The old women who had seen Miss Sheila, as they mostly called her, but once in this

costume had many a long story to tell about it over the peat-fire to their neighbors who had not been so fortunate ; and it was gravely doubted whether the wife of Sir James, or the wife of the Duke of Argyll, or even the Queen herself, had such a wonderful dress and hat and gloves.

They walked up and over the rough shingle, until they reached a path skirting some low sand-hills, and this they followed along the shore until they reached the manse. The minister was at the door ; he came out bare-headed to receive them ; there was a great dignity in his speech.

"Well, are the young folks here?" said Sheila.

"Yes, indeed and mirover," said the minister, "and it will be a proud day for them that you will sign the marriage-lines, Mrs. Laffenter, and you, sir, too. And I hef got the horse for you, Mrs. Laffenter, if you will be determined to go to Ardtileach. And I hef peen told that the English hef two dinners in the day, which is a strange thing to me, but it iss no pusiness of mine what-effer ; and you will be so long in England every year, Mrs. Laffenter, that you will hef gone away from the way you used to live at home ; but if you wass so kind, now, ass to tek the first dinner—that iss at one o'clock—in my poor house, it would be a proud day for me too. And it

iss no ferry fine dinner I hef, but some mutton just ass goot ass you will get it in London; and I hef some ferry goot whiskey—there iss no petter apout here. And if you wass so kind, Miss—Mrs. Laffenter—”

“Certainly, Mr. MacDonald,” said Mr. Lavender, interposing; “we will dine with you at once, on condition you dine with us at seven—that is, if we can get back from Ardtilleach by that time. You must try the English way of having two dinners—you may call the second one supper, if you like. Now don’t let us keep the young people waiting.”

Angus McEachran and Moira Fergus were seated in the minister’s parlor, both of them very silent. When Mrs. Lavender entered the room, the girl rose hastily, as if she would rush forward and thank her; then she paused, and seemed to shrink back.

“And are you ferry well, Moira?” said Mrs. Lavender, advancing and holding out her hand. “And do you remember the last time I saw you at Ardtilleach?”

The girl, trembling a good deal, made a courtesy, and timidly took the hand that was offered to her.

“It iss no words I hef this day—to thank you,” she said, “that you will come to the wedding of a poor lass—for Angus McEachran he wass wanting me to tek the money

to get the clothes for the wedding, but if I had got the clothes for the wedding, it wass effery one in Ardtilleach would know of it. And—and—that iss why I hef not the clothes for the wedding.”

It was an apology. Moira was ashamed of her rough clothes, that were not fit for a wedding to which Miss Sheila Mackenzie of Borva had come. But Sheila made her sit down, and sate down beside her, and talked to her of many things, so that there was soon an end to her shamefacedness.

“Mr. MacDonald,” said Angus McEachran, rather anxiously—seeing that the minister was thinking more of his distinguished guests than of the business in hand, “if you wass ass kind ass to be quick—for it is Moria’s father if he wass to go back to the house, he might hef some thought of it.”

“Ay, ay,” said the minister, recollecting himself. “Where is Isabel?”

He called his housekeeper into the room; she was smartly dressed, and she wore a gold chain that her son had sent her from America. The minister now grew formal in his manner. He spoke in a solemn and low voice. He directed Angus McEachran and Moira Fergus to stand up together; and then with a closed Bible in his hand, he placed himself before them, the three witnesses of the ceremony standing on

one side. The light from the small window fell on the young Highland girl's face—she was now very pale, and she kept her eyes bent on the floor.

He began by offering up a prayer—a strange, rambling series of Biblical quotations, of entreaties, of exhortations addressed to those before him—which was at once earnest, pathetic, and grotesque. Mr. MacDonald would rather have prayed in the Gaelic; but the presence of the strangers led him to speak in English, which was obviously a difficulty to him. For into this curious prayer he introduced a sort of history and justification of what he had done with regard to the young people.

“Ay,” he said, “it wass to Glassgow they were going, and they would hef been as sheeps in the den of the lions, and as the young lambs among the wolves. For it iss writen of Babylon, the evil city, Lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of the great nations from ta north country, ay, and Chaldea shall be a spoil. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round apout; all ye that will pend the pow shoot at her, ay, and spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord! And it wass to Glassgow they were going; and it wass no man could hear that and not safe them from going. And we had the great help of frients from

far islands, ay, from the desolate places of the islands, and they came to us in our trouple, and it wass a great help they would gife to us, and the Lord will tek that into account, and reward them for the help they hef given to the young lad and the young lass that iss before us this tay.”

Then he went on to denounce anger and evil passion as the cause of much of human trouble; and he closed his prayer with an earnest hope that divine influence would soften the heart of John Fergus, and lead him to live in peace and affection with his daughter and her husband.

The exhortation following the prayer was shorter than the prayer. It referred chiefly to the duties of married life; but even here Mr. MacDonald brought in a good deal of justification of his own conduct in having assisted a young lad and a young lass to get married.

“Ay, ay,” said he, “it iss written that a man shall leaf his father and his mother and ko and be joined unto his wife; and the wife, too, she will do the same, as it hass been from the peginning of the worlt, amen. And why no? And if there iss any man so foolish ass to say to a young man or a young lass, ‘No, you will hef to wait until I die before you will be for getting marriet, and until I die you will not be for getting marriet at all,’ I will say to him

that he is a foolish man, and a man who has no sense in his head whatever. And there iss too much of the young men going away from the islands apout us, and they will go away to Glassgow, and to Greenock, and to America, and to other places, and they will marry wives there, and who iss to know what kind of wives they will marry? No, it iss petter, ay, and ferry much petter, for a young man to hef seen a young lass in the years of her young tays, and he will know of her family, and he will hef seen her going to the church, and he will know she is a fit lass to be a wife for him, and no strange woman that hass lifed in a great town, where there are wild men, and sodgers, and the Roman Catholic Priests."

Presently the simple ceremony had to be performed; and when Angus McEachran was bidden to take the young girl's hand, and when the minister demanded to know if any one were present who had aught to say against the marriage of these two, there was a silence as if every one was listening for the sound of a footstep on the gravel outside.

There was no answer to that summons; wherever John Fergus was, he was certainly not in the neighborhood of Mr. MacDonald's manse.

"And so you are a married woman Moira," said Sheila, when it was all over.

The girl could not speak, but there were big tears in her eyes, and she went forward and took Mrs. Laverder's hand and timidly kissed it. Angus McEachran had been standing about, silent and awkward; at length he, too, went forward, and said in desperation:

"Mrs. Laffenter, it iss a ferry goot pair of oars for a small poat I hef made last week at Ardilleach. Will I send you the oars to Borva?"

"Oh, no, Angus," the young lady said; "that is ferry kind of you, but we have plenty of oars at Borva. But this is what I will be ferry glad if you will do—it is a good carpenter they say you are, and any day you hef the time to make a small boat for a boy that he will be able to pull about with a string, then I will be ferry glad to hef the boat from you."

"Ay," said Angus, with his face brightening, "and will you tek the poat? Ay, ay, you will gife me time to mek the poat, and I will be ferry proud the day that you will tek the poat from me."

Then he turned to the minister.

"And, Mr. MacDonald," said he, rather shamefacedly, "if you will not be ferry angry, there iss a gallon of goot whiskey—oh, ay, it iss ferry goot whiskey, I hef peen told—and I will pring it over this morning when I wass coming ofer, and I hef left it out in the heather—"

"You hef left it out in the heath-

er!" said the minister, angrily; "and it iss a foolish man you are, Angus McEachran, to go and leaf a gallon of goot whiskey out on the heather! And where is the heather? And maybe you will go now and get it out of the heather!"

"I wass afrait to say apout it pefore," Angus said. "But I will go and get you the whiskey, and it is ferry proud I am that you will take the whiskey—and it is not ferry pad whiskey mirover."

As soon as Angus had gone off to the hiding-place of the jar, they all went outside into the clear air, which was fresh with the sea-breeze and sweet with the smell of the peats.

"Sheila," said Mr. Lavender, "can you hurry on Mr. MacDonald's housekeeper? The great work of the day has to be done yet. And there will be little time to cross to Ardtilleach."

"Oh, Mrs. Laffenter!" cried Moira. "You will not go to see my father!"

"Indeed I will," said Sheila. "Are you afraid he will eat me, Moira?"

"I am afraid—I do not know what I am afraid of except that you will not go to him, that iss all I ask from you, Mrs. Laffenter—"

"The teffle," exclaimed Mr. MacDonald, fiercely, and then he recollected in whose society he was. "What iss it will keep Mrs. Laf-

fenter from speaking to any one? Your father iss an angry man, Moira Fergus—ay, you will be Moira McEachran now—he iss a ferry angry man—but will he use his pad language to Mrs. Laffenter? It iss not to be thought of, Moira!"

At this moment the yellow-bearded young fisherman came back with the jar of whiskey; and he blushed a little as he handed the little present to the minister.

"Ay," said Mr. MacDonald, going into the house. "Isabal must be ferry quick, for it iss a long way the way to Ardtilleach, and the second tinner of the tay it will be on poard the yacht at eight o'clock or seven o'clock, or petween poth of the two. And Isabal, she must go town to the yacht and tell that tall Duncan of Mr. Mackenzie's to gife her the saddle for Mrs. Laffenter's horse."

It was with great difficulty that they could persuade Angus and Moira to come into the house and sit down at the table with the great people from Borvabost. Mr. MacDonald, of himself, could never have managed it; but Sheila took Moira by the hand and led her into the room and then the young husband silently followed.

The minister had been too modest in speaking of the banquet he had prepared for his guests. He had promised them but mutton and whiskey; and behold, there was a bottle of claret wine on the table, and the

very first dish was the head and shoulders of a magnificent salmon.

"Well, that is a fine fish!" said Mr. Lavender.

"Oh, ay," said the minister, immensely flattered. "He wass a fine fish—a grand fish. He wass ass big ass a dog—and more."

It was a great grief to the minister that Mr. Lavender would not taste of the claret, which had come all the way from Stornoway, and was of so excellent a vintage that it was named after the Prime Minister in Parliament himself. But Sheila had some of it in a tumbler, and pronounced it very good; though the minister observed that "there wass no great strength to go to the head in the French wines," and he "wass ferry much surprised to see that Mrs. Laffenter would hef watter with the claret wine."

"And I hear that Angus is going to build a cottage for you, Moira," said Mrs. Lavender, "further removed from the village and the curing-houses. That will be ferry good for you; and it is not every one that has a husband who can work at two trades, and be a good fisherman on the sea, and a good carpenter on shore. And I suppose you will be going back now to the house that he has at present."

"Ay, that iss the worst of it," said the girl, sadly. "If my father is ferry angry, it will be a pad thing that we will haf to life in Ardtill-

each together; and all the neighbors will know that he is angry, and he will hef the long story to tell to each of them."

"But you must not look at it in that way," her counsellor said, cheerfully. "You will soon get over your father's anger; and the neighbors—well, the neighbors are likely to take your side of the story, if there is a story. Now, you must keep up your spirits, Moira; it is a bad thing for a young wife to be down-hearted, for a man will soon tire of that, because he may not understand the cause of it. And why should you be down-hearted; I dare say, now, that when you come over to Ardtilleach—you will not be long after us, I suppose—you will find the neighbors ready to have a dance over the wedding as soon as the evening comes on."

As there was little time to be lost on the part of those who were coming back the same evening to the yacht, the small and shaggy animal that was to carry Mrs. Lavender to Ardtilleach was brought round to the door. The young bride and bridegroom, with somewhat wistful eyes, saw their ambassadress set out, her husband walking smartly by her side.

"It iss a great thing they hef undertaken to do," said the minister, "ay, and if they cannot do it, there iss not any one in all the islands will be able to do it."

CHAPTER VI.

HABET.

ABOUT one o'clock of the day on which Moira Fergus was married, her father returned home from the curing-house for his dinner. He was surprised to find no one inside the small cottage. There were the usual preparations, certainly—a loaf of bread, a jug of milk on the side-table, and the big black pot hung high over the smoldering peats. He was angry that she should not be there; but he had no thought of what had occurred.

In a sullen mood he proceeded to get for himself his dinner. He lowered the black pot and raked up the peats; then, when the steam began to rise, he helped himself, and sat down to the small table. Moira should pay for this.

But by and by, as the time passed, and there was no Moira, he began to be suspicious; and he had not well finished his dinner when he started off, with a dark look on his face, for the cottage in which Angus McEachran lived. There was an old woman there who acted in some measure the part of cook and housekeeper for Angus—a bent, shrivelled old woman, more sulky even than John Fergus himself.

“Is Angus McEachran in the house?” said he, in the Gaelic.

“Is Angus McEachran in the

house?” she retorted, contemptuously.

“I ask you if he is in the house!” he said angrily.

“And it is a foolish man you are to ask such a question!” the old woman said, quite as fiercely. “As if a young man will be in the house in the middle of the day, when all the young men will be at the fishing.”

With a petulant oath, Fergus went past her and walked into the cottage. There was no one inside.

Then, with his suspicions growing momentarily stronger, he walked away from Ardtilleach, until, at one point of the coast, he reached the school which did service for the whole of the island. He went inside and spoke to the schoolmaster; Alister Lewis and Moira's younger sisters were called aside and questioned. They knew nothing of her.

Then he went back to Ardtilleach, and by this time there was a great commotion in the village, for it was known that Moira Fergus could not be found, and that her father was seeking everywhere for her. The old women came out of the hovels, and the old men came in from the potato fields, and the small children listened, wondering, but understanding nothing.

“Ay, ay, it iss a ferry angry man he is, and the young lass will hef many a hard word from him; and if she will go away, what iss the rea-

son of it that she should not go away?" said one.

"And there iss no finer lad in the islands than Angus McEachran," said another; "and him ferry good at mendin' a boat, and ferry goot at the fishin' too and mirover; and it iss a foolish man John Fergus iss that he will think the lass will never marry."

"Ay, ay," said one old man, coming up with an armful of smoke-saturated roofing, which he was about to carry to one of the small fields, "and iss it known that Angus McEachran will not go out with the boat this morning, and young Tonal Neil, he will go out with the poat, and that wass what I will see myself when I wass coming from Harra-bost."

This was news indeed, and it was made the basis of a thousand conjectures. Moira Fergus and Angus McEachran had gone away from Darroch, and caught up one of the schooners making for the Lewis. They were on their way to Stornoway; and from Stornoway they would go to Glasgow or America; and John Fergus would see his daughter Moira no more.

When John Fergus made his appearance these gossippers were silent, for there was anger on his face, and they feared him.

"You hef not seen Moira?" said he.

"No," answered one and all.

"Hef you seen Angus McEachran, then?"

"This iss what I will tell you, John Fergus," said the old man, who had laid down his bundle of black straw. "It wass Tonal Neil he will be for going out this morning in the poat, and Angus McEachran he wass not in the poat, and it iss many a one will say now that if Angus McEachran and Moira hef gone away to Styornoway—"

"They hef not gone to Styornoway!" exclaimed Fergus. "It iss a fool that you are, Peter Taggart, to speak of Styornoway!"

But at this moment the group of idlers was moved by a new surprise; for who should appear at the further end of the village than the daughter of Mr. Mackenzie, the king of the fair island of Borva, and she was coming along on horseback, with her husband, a tall young Englishman, by her side. What could this wonderful portent mean? Were they on their way to visit Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, who was a clever man and a travelled man, and had been to Styornoway and Glasgow and other distant places?

They saw her, while as yet she was some distance off, dismount from the horse, and then her husband led the animal until he found a post to which he tied the bridle. Then these two came along together, and the village people thought she resembled a queen, and had the

dress of a queen and the air of a queen.

"And where is the house of John Fergus?" said she, when she came up, to an old woman.

The old woman was rather taken aback by this great honor, and she hurriedly dropped a curtsy, and exclaimed:

"Ay, iss it John Fergus! And here iss John Fergus himself!"

Moira's father was standing apart, with sullen brows. He had some dim suspicion that this unexpected visit had something to do with the disappearance of his daughter.

"Mr. Fergus," said Sheila, going forward to him, and speaking to him in a low voice, "it iss a long time since I hef been at Ardtilleach, and I had forgotten you."

"Ay," said he, not very courteously.

"But I had not forgotten your daughter Moira."

There was a quick, suspicious glance in the deep-set eyes; the man said nothing.

"Now, Mr. Fergus, I am going to ask you to be a kind man and a reasonable man this day. And it iss a very simple thing I hef to tell you. It was last week that Mr. MacDonald, the minister, came to Borva, and he was saying that Angus McEachran and your daughter Moira—they would like to be married, and that you were against it—"

"Iss it against it you will say?" he broke in fiercely. "I would like to see—"

"Let me speak to you, Mr. Fergus," said the young lady, gently. "Well, Angus and Moira did not see any use in waiting, for they knew you would never consent, and I believe they had determined to run away from Darroch and go to Glasgow—"

"And hef they gone to Glasgow?" demanded Fergus, in a voice that was heard even by the neighbors, who had remained at a respectful distance.

"No, they have not. The minister thought—and I thought—that would be a very bad thing. I said you were a reasonable man, Mr. Fergus, and I would go to you to speak with you, and you would listen to it, and you would understand that a young girl does no wrong in thinking of getting married—"

"Where is Moira?" said he, suddenly. "You—you hef taken her away—ay, that iss it—it iss a ferry grand laty you are, but if you hef taken away Moira Fergus—"

"Mr. Fergus," said Sheila's husband, stepping forward, "I'd strongly advise you to be a little more civil."

"And you!" said he, turning fiercely on this new assailant, "what iss it to you that I will hef command ofer my own house? And what iss it to you to come and touch such

things? And I say to you, where iss Moira?"

Mr. Lavender would have replied, and, doubtless, with injudicious vehemence, but Sheila interposed.

"I will tell you where she iss, Mr. Fergus," she said, quietly. "Now, you will be a reasonable man, and you will see how it iss better to make the best of what iss done; and Moira iss a good lass, and—and—she iss coming now to Ardtilleach, and Angus too, and it was over at Mr. Macdonald's manse to-day they were—and you will be a reasonable man, Mr. Fergus—"

"At the manse!" he cried, seeing the whole thing. "And they were married?"

"Well, yes, indeed, Mr. Fergus—"

At this confirmation of his suspicions his rage became quite uncontrollable, and he suddenly broke up on Sheila with a flood of vituperation in Gaelic. Her husband could not understand a word, but he saw the girl retreat a step, with her face pale.

He sprang forward.

"Speak English, you hound, or I'll kick you down to the shore and back again!" he cried.

"Iss it English!" Fergus shouted in his rage. "Iss it English! Ay, it iss the English thieves coming about the island to steal when the door is left open! And it iss you, Sheila Mackenzie, it iss you that will answer for this—"

In his ungovernable passion he had raised his clenched fist in the air, and inadvertently he advanced a step. Probably he had not the least intention in the world of striking Sheila, but the threatening gesture was quite enough for her husband; so that, quick as lightning, he dealt John Fergus a blow right on the forehead which sent him staggering backward until he tripped and fell heavily. There was a scream from the old women, who came running forward to the prostrate man. Mr. Lavender turned to his wife, his face a trifle pale.

"Are your nerves fluttered, Sheila?" he said. "Come over to this bench here and sit down. Will you have a drop of whiskey?"

Sheila was indeed trembling; she suffered herself to be led to the wooden bench, and there she sate down.

"Have you hurt him?" she said, in a low voice.

"Certainly," said he. "I have hurt him and my own knuckles as well. But he'll come to all right. Don't you mind him."

Mr. Lavender walked back to the group of people. John Fergus was sitting up in the middle of the road, looking considerably dazed.

"Here, some of you folks, get me a drop of whiskey, and a clean glass, and some water."

The request was attended to at once.

"Well, John Fergus," said Mr. Lavender, "you'll keep a more civil tongue in your head next time I pay you a visit."

He went back to his wife and prevailed on her to take a little whiskey and water to steady her nerves.

"It iss a bad thing you have done," she said, sadly. "He will never forgive them now."

"He never would have forgiven them," replied the husband. "I saw that at once. Your appeals were only making him more frantic. Besides, do you think I would allow, in any case, a cantankerous old fool like that to swear at you in his beast of a language?"

"You did not know he was swearing."

"I knew very well."

"And what shall we do now?"

"Why, go back again—that's all. We shall meet the young folks on the road."

"We cannot go away till you see how John Fergus is."

"Oh, John Fergus is right enough—see, there he goes, slinking off to one of the cottages, probably his own. A little rest will do him good, and let his temper cool. Now, Sheila, pull yourself together; you have got to entertain a distinguished guest on board the yacht this evening, and we must not lose time."

Sheila rose and took her husband's arm. As they walked along to the

post where the horse was tied, villagers came up to them, and more than one said—

"Ay, ay, sir, it wass ferry well done, and a ferry good thing whatever, that you will teach John Fergus to keep a civil tongue, and he is a ferry coorse man, and no one will dare to say anything to him. Ay, and to think that I would speak like that to Miss Sheila Mackenzie—it wass well done, and a ferry well done."

"But he is not hurt?" Sheila said.

"Well, he iss hurt, ay, and he iss not hurt; but he will be going to lie down, and when he gets up again, then there will be nothing; but he iss ferry wake on the legs, and there iss no more anger in his speech—no, there will be no more anger now for the rest of this day whatever."

So Mrs. and Mr. Lavender went away from Ardtilleach, the former rather down-hearted over the failure of her enterprise, the latter endeavoring to convince her that that might have been expected, and that no great harm had been done. Indeed, when in crossing the lonely moorland road, they saw Angus McEachran and Moira Fergus at a great distance, coming towards them, Sheila "lifted up her voice and wept," and it was in vain that her husband tried to comfort her. She dismounted from the saddle,

and sate down on a block of silver-grey granite by the road-side, to await Moira's coming; and when the young Highland girl came up, she could scarcely speak to her. Moira was infinitely perturbed to see this great lady grieved because of her, and when she heard all that had happened, she said, sadly.

"But that iss what I hef expected—there wass no other thing that I hef expected. If there wass any chance of getting a smooth word from my father, do you think, Mrs. Laffenter, that Angus McEachran and me we would be for going to Glassgow?"

"It iss a bad home-coming after the wedding that you will hef," said her friend.

"Yes, indeed, but we hef looked for that; and it iss a great thing you hef done for us, Mrs. Laffenter, in coming all the way from Borva to the wedding; but we will not forget that; and it will be remembered in the island for many a day. And now you will be for going on to the manse, Mrs. Laffenter?"

"Moira," said her friend, "we are going away to London in a day or two now, and I would like to hef a word from you, and you or Angus will send me a letter, to tell me what is going on in Darroch?"

"Indeed, yes," said Angus, "and they will know you ferry well in London if we send the letter, or iss there more ass one of the same name in London?"

"You must have the address," said Mr. Lavender, getting out a card.

"Oh, I know the attress ferry well," said the young fisherman; "iss there any one so foolish ass not to know where London iss? And they will tek the letter ferry well."

"Yes, but you must put more than London on the letter, for there are more people in a street in London than in all Darroch and Killeena, and there are as many streets as there are stones in your house, Angus."

He looked at the card as if it were some strange talisman; then he put it in his pocket; there was a little hand-shaking, and the bride and bridegroom went on their way.

"Moira!" Mrs. Lavender called out, suddenly.

The girl turned and came back; she was met half way by her friend, who had a great sympathy and sadness in her eyes.

"It iss ferry sorry for you I am this day," said Sheila, in a low voice, "and there iss not anything I would not do to hef got for you a better home-coming. And you will speak to your father, Moira—not now, when he iss in his anger—but afterwards, and perhaps he will see that what iss done iss done, and he will be friends with you."

"I will try that, Mrs. Laffenter," said the girl.

"And you will send me a letter to London?"

"Oh, ay, I will send you the letter to London, and it will be a proud day for me the day that I will send you a letter, and you will not say a word of it to any one Mrs. Laffenter, if there iss not the ferry goot English in the letter, for it iss Angus he can write the goot English petter ass me."

"Your English will be good enough, Moira," said her friend. "Good-bye."

So again they parted; and that was the last these two saw of each other for many long days and months.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST CLOUD.

It was well on in the afternoon when Angus McEachran and his young wife reached Ardtilleach; and by that time one or two of the boats had come in from the ling fishing, so that there were a good many people about. And there was a great commotion in the place over the news of what had happened—a commotion such as had not shaken Ardtilleach since the foundering of the French schooner on Harrobost Head. Moreover, two or three of the young fellows took solemn oath in the Gaelic that they would not allow Angus McEachran's wedding to pass over without a dance and a

dram, whatever was thought of it by John Fergus, who remained sullen, sour, and ashamed in his own home.

There was a great deal of handshaking when the bride and bridegroom arrived, and many were the good wishes expressed by the old women about the future of Moira. The young girl was grateful; but her eyes kept wandering about the place, apparently seeking for her father.

There was no time to organize a great entertainment, as was done when Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, married Ailasa McDonald, a lass from Killeena; but one of the curers—the very curer, indeed, who was John Fergus' master—came forward in a handsome manner, and said that if two or three of the young fellows would begin and roll some barrels aside, he would tender the use of his curing-house, so that some frugal supper and a dance might be possible. This was done in due time, and Angus' companions set to work to hold some little feast in his honor. One went away declaring that he would himself, as sure as he was a living man, bring six gallons of whiskey to the curing-house. Another, a famous musician, went off for his fiddle. Another declared that it would be a shame, and a very great shame, if Alister Lewis were not told of the approaching celebration, and immediately set out for the school-house. Then

the boys about obtained permission from old Donald Neil to gather the potato-shaws out of his field, and these they brought to the point of the shore outside the curing-house so that, when night came, a mighty bonfire and beacon should tell even the ships out at sea that great doings were going on on land.

Angus McEachran was very proud of all this, and very glad to be among his own people again. The ceremony over there at the Free Church Manse had rather frightened him; now he felt at home; and having drunk a glass or two, he was as anxious for a dance as any one. But with Moira the case was very different. Of all the crowd she was the only one who was anxious, sad, and preoccupied. She had none of the quick laughter of a bride.

"Ay, and what iss the matter with you, Moira?" said her husband.

"There iss nothing the matter with me, Angus," she replied; but the wistful and anxious look did not depart from her face.

Well, there was not much of a supper that night, and, indeed, many did not go into the curing-house at all, but remained outside, where dancing had already begun on a rocky plateau covered with short sea-grass. It was a lovely night—the wonderful glow of the northern twilight shining over the dark heavens, and the stars gradual-

ly becoming more distinct on the smooth surface of the sea. There was a fresher air here on the rocks than in the heated curing-house, and the whiskey was as good outside as in.

Then a great shout arose, for the boys had put a light to the bonfire, and presently the long, lithe tongues of fire began to leap up, while the young men began to perform feats of jumping through the flames. In the excitement of the moment the curer, who had had a glass, became reckless, and ordered the boys to bring a heap of drift-wood from the curing-house. Then, indeed, there was a bonfire—such a bonfire as the shores of Darroch and Killeena had never seen before. There was a great noise and confusion, of course, friend calling to friend, and the old women trying to prevent the boys from springing through the flames.

In the midst of all this noise Moira slipped away from the side of her husband. She had been inside the curing-house, and there her health and the health of her husband had been loyally drunk, and she had gone round the whole company, shaking hands with each, while she said "Shlainte!" and put her lips to the whiskey. The cry of "The bonfire!" of course called every one out, and in the crowd she was separated from her husband. She seized this opportunity.

The great red glare was shining

athwart the hollows in the rocks, and even lighting up palely the fronts of the cottages of Ardtilleach, so that she had not much fear for her footing as she passed over to the road. There seemed to be no one left in Ardtilleach. There was not a sound to be heard—nothing but the distant voices of the people calling to each other round the bonfire. All the fishermen, and the young women, and the old folks, and the children, had gone out to the point.

Moira went rapidly along the cottages till she came to her father's, her heart beating hurriedly. When she reached the door a cry of fright had, nearly escaped her, for there was her father—his face partly lit up by the reflection of the red light—sternly regarding her. He did not move to let her pass into the house. He did not say a word to her. He only looked at her as if she were a dog, a boat, a piece of stone. Rather than this terrible reception, she would have had him break out into a fury of rage.

She was not prepared for it; and after the first wild look of entreaty she turned her eyes to the ground, and stood there, trembling and speechless.

"Hef you no word for me?" she said at length.

"None!" he answered.

He seemed to be regarding the distant bonfire, its long shoots of

flame into the black night, and the alternate dusky and red figures moving round it.

"It wass many, a time," she began in desperation, hoping to make some excuse; "it wass many a time, I will say to you—"

"I hef no word for you, Moira Fergus," her father said, with apparent indifference. "You hef gone away; you will stay away. It iss a disgrace you hef brought on yourself and your family—"

"A disgrace!" she cried. "And what are the people doing, then, if they think it iss a disgrace I hef made? That iss not in the thoughts of any one of them."

"The people!" said her father, for a second forgetting his forced composure. "And the teffle knows what the people will be after—it iss the whiskey; and after they hef the whiskey they will go home, and to-morrow what will they say of you, Moira Fergus?"

"They will say no harm of me," the girl said. "But you, yourself, father, you will say no harm of me; and if we can be frients, and Angus will come to you and say—"

"Do you hear what I hef told you?" said he, fiercely. "I hef no word to speak to you—no, not if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years. To-morrow you will be to me ass if you wass dead; to-morrow, and the next day, and all the years after that. You hef gone

away ; ay, and you shall stay away, Moira Fergus ! I hef no more speaking for you, nor for Angus McEachran ; and it iss a foolish man Angus McEachran will be if he comes near me or my house."

"Father—only this—"

"I tell you, Moira Fergus, to go away ; or by Kott, I will tek you, and I will trag you out to the curing-house, and put you among your trunken frients ! That iss what I will do, by Kott !"

His vehemence frightened her ; she went back a step, and then she looked at him. He turned and went inside the cottage. Then there was nothing for the girl but to go back to her friends, whose shouts still resounded through the silence of the night.

"Ay, and where hef you been, Moira ?" her husband said, he alone having noticed her absence.

"I wass down to my father's house," she answered, sadly.

"And what will he say to you ?"

"He has no word for me. Tomorrow, and the next day, and all the time after that, I will be just ass one that iss dead to him ; ay, ay, sure enough."

"And what of that ?" her husband said, "Tit you not know that pefore ? And what iss the harm of it ? It iss a ferry goot thing indeed, and mirover that you will be away from a coorse man, that wass ferry terrifle to you and to all his neigh-

bors. And it iss ferry little you hev to complain apoit, Moira ; and now you will come and hef a tance."

"It iss not any tance I will be thinking about," said the girl.

He became a little impatient.

"In the name of Kott, what iss it you will want, Moira ? It iss a strange thing to hef a young lass going apout ferry sorrowful on the tay of her wedding. And it iss many a one will say that you are not ferry glad of the wedding."

That was true enough. It was remarked that, whereas everybody was ready for a dance and a song, Moira only seemed to care nothing for the dance and the song. But the old women knew the reason of it ; and one said to the other—

"Ay, ay, it iss a hard thing for a young lass to go away from her own home to get marriet, and it iss ferry strange she will be for a time, and then she will heed that no more. But Moira Fergus, it iss ferry pad for Moira Fergus that her father iss a coorse and a wild man, and she will hef no chance of being frients with him any more ; and the young lass—well, she iss a young lass—and that will trouple a young lass, indeed and mirover."

But these shrewd experiences had no hold of Angus McEachran. His quick Celtic temperament resented the affront put upon him, on his very wedding day, by the girl whom he had married. The neighbors

saw she was anything but glad ; and the young man had it in his heart to say, " Moira, if you are sorry for the wedding, I am too ; and sorrier still that I cannot go and have it undone." He moved away from her.

By this time the tumult round the bonfire had subsided, for now nothing but smoldering ashes were left, and the people had formed again into dancing groups, and talking groups, and drinking groups—perhaps the first two ought to be included in the third. Angus Mc-Eachran would not dance at all ; but he had recovered his temper, and once or twice he went and said a friendly word to Moira, who was standing with some of the old women looking on at the reels. But what had fired this other young fellow to call out :

" Hey ! there iss one man not here this day, and, by Kott, he ought to be here this day. And he iss a foolish man and a madman that will stay at home when his own daughter is being married ! "

" Ay, ay ! " said two or three.

" And this iss what I say," continued the fisherman, who had evidently had a glass. " I am going ofer to John Fergus's house."

" Ay, and me, too," responded one or two of his companions.

" And we will hef a joke with him," cried one.

" Ay, ay, and we will hef him out," cried another.

" We will put a light to his thatch ! " cried a third. " And you will see if John Fergus will not come out to his daughter's wedding ! "

At this Moira darted forward before them.

" If there iss one of you," she said in an excited way, " if there iss one of you will go near to my father's house this night, this iss what I will do—I will go and jump ofer the rock there into the water."

" Ay, ay," said her husband, coming forward rather gloomily, " it iss no use the having a joke with John Fergus. Let John Fergus alone. If he will not come out to his daughter's wedding, that iss nothing to any one—it iss a ferry goot thing there are others that hef come to the wedding, and ass for John Fergus, he will be ferry welcome to stay at home this night, or the next night, or the next fife huntret years, and tam him ! "

So that matter passed over, and the merry-making was resumed—the fiddler having illimitable calls on him, and the very oldest determined to show that they had not altogether lost the use of toe and heel. There was no lack of whiskey ; and altogether the improvised entertainment in honor of the wedding of Moira Fergus became a notable and memorable thing. But there were two or three present who remarked that Moira looked very sor-

rowful ; and that Angus McEachran was not so well pleased with her as a husband should be with his newly-married wife.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTERMEDDLER.

JOHN FERGUS kept his word ; his daughter was as one dead to him. When he passed her in the village he had neither look nor speech for her ; and then she went home with a heavy heart. At first her husband tried to reason with her about her unavailing silence and sadness, but he soon got tired of that, and impatient, and glad to be out with his companions in the boat, or on the beach, where a laugh and a joke were possible.

“What in the name of Kott iss the use of it, Moira?” he would say to her, when he was near losing his temper. “Hef you not known all along that your father, John Fergus, would hef no word for you if you wass to go and get married? Hef I not told you that? And it wass many a time you will say to me, ‘Angus, I cannot stay longer in the house with my father ;’ and then I hef said to you, ‘Moira, it will be a ferry tifferent thing when you hef a house to yourself, and you will be the mistress of the house, and no one will speak a

coorse word to you.’ And now you hef no more thought of that—you hef no more thought of anything but your father—and this iss what I will say to you, Moira, that no man hass the patience with a wife who iss discontented from the morning to the night, and it iss many’s the time I hef wished you could go back to your father—and tam him!”

In due course of time, and in fulfilment of her promise, Moira sate down one day and wrote a letter to Mrs. Lavender, who was still in London. This letter she brought to her husband, asking him to address it for her, and hinting that he might look through it, for she was better at spelling the Gaelic than the English. Angus got a pen and sat down.

He had not read far when an angry light came to his eyes. Moira’s letter to her friend was not the letter which a young wife might be expected to write. It was very sad and mournful; and it was all about her father, and the impossibility of conciliating him. There was not a word in it about her husband, or of his project of building a cottage with a slate roof, or of the recent state of the fishing around the coast. It was all her father, and her father, and her father ; and the young fisherman’s face grew dark. Finding that she had gone outside, he got another

piece of paper and wrote as follows :

“ This is what Moira haz to tell to you, Mrs. Laffenter, and this is all she haz to tell to you, and it is not ferra much whateffer. But there is another word I would say to you that Moira haz not said, and when a man marries a wife, it is not to be triffen out of the house he will marry a wife, and this is what has come to us, that Moira she will think nothing from the morning to the night but of the quarrel with John Fergus, and it is not any other thing she will think of, and there is no man will haf the patience with that. And that is how we are, Mrs. Laffenter, and you will not trouble yourself to say a word of it to Moira, for I haf said a great many things to her ; but it is no use there is in them, and all the day she will haf no word for me, and no laugh or a joke like a young lass, and it is the Rott’s mercy there will be one or two young men about or I would go away to Glassgow indeed and mirover. And you waz ferra kind to us, Mrs. Laffenter, and it is no great gladness I haf in telling you the story, but I waz thinking if you got Moira’s letter you would be for writing to John Fergus, and there will be no use in that at all. And I am your obedient servant to command, Angus McEachran. The feshen haz been ferra good round about Darroch since you waz here,

but a man haz no heart to go to the feshen when he comes back to a discontented house.”

He did not show Moira that second letter — he knew that remonstrance was of no avail ; he merely inclosed it in the same envelope and addressed that to Mrs. Lavender in London.

A day or two afterwards Mr. MacDonald, the minister, came over to Ardtilleach, and on such occasions he invariably went first to the house of Angus McEachran. Angus had never complained to him ; but the minister had got to imagine that there was something wrong ; and occasionally he was rather disturbed about it, for he held himself as partly responsible for the marriage of these young people. This time he found Moira alone.

“ And are you ferry well, Moira ? ” said he, looking at her keenly.

He could see that the girl had recently been crying.

“ Oh, ay, Mr. MacDonald ; and are you ferry well too ? And it iss a fine tay you hef got to come ofer to Ardtilleach.”

“ And iss Angus gone out to the fishing ? ”

“ I do not know that,” she said.

“ You do not know that ? ” said the minister. “ Well, well, the tays are ferry much altered now ; for in the former tays a young wife would go outside the house, or go down to the rocks, to say good-bye

to her husband when he wass going out to the fishing; but you are ferry much in the house, Moira."

"And that iss true, Mr. MacDonald," she answered; "and why should I not be ferry much in the house? Iss it a goot thing for me to go out into the fillage, and my father he will go by without a word to me, and all the neighbors will see it? Yes, I am ferry much in the house, Mr. MacDonald."

"Well," said he, "it iss not a goot thing that you tell me; but you wass always saying, Moira, that you would be petter away from the coorse tongue of your father; and now that you are away, iss it any use being ferry sorry for that, and you a young lass that ought to be ferry prout of a young husband, and one that iss as cleffer with his fingers ass Angus McEachran? No, no, Moira, you hef no right to mek such complaints."

"I do not complain at all, Mr. MacDonald," the girl answered. "No, it iss no use in complaining, none at all."

The minister regarded her for a second or two; he did not quite know how far he would be justified in interfering.

"Well, I am going on to the school-house, Moira," said he, "to see Alister Lewis apout his frients, the MacIntyres, who will be thinking of going away to America; and when I come back to Ardtill-

leach again, Moira, I will come in and say good-bye to you."

So he went on his way. But he had not got a quarter of a mile away from the village when, to his great surprise, he saw Angus McEachran sitting out on the rocks over the sea, in the company of old Donald Neil, and both of them making very merry indeed, as he heard from their laughing. The minister crossed over to them. They were seated on the dry turf of the rocks, and there was a black bottle and a single glass between them.

"And are you ferry well, Angus?" said the minister. "And you, Donald Neil? And it wass no thought of seeing you, Angus, that I had this tay. You are not at the fishing?"

"No," said the young man, with some embarrassment. "A man cannot always be going to the fishing."

"I do not think," said the minister, "no, I do not think, Angus McEachran, there iss any young man but yourself in the whole of Ardtilleach this tay—except the young men in the curing-house."

"Well, well!" said Angus shortly; "iss there any one of the young men hass been so often to the fishing ass I haf been, and where iss the one that hass ass much money in the bank at Styornoway?"

"Ay, ay," said the minister, "that

iss a goot thing, and a ferry goot thing, mirover; and you will find the goot of the money when you will pegin to puild the cottage with the slate roof. But the money will not get any the bigger, Angus McEachran, if you will stay at home on the fine tays for the fishing, ay, and if you will sit out on the rocks trinking whiskey in the middle of the tay!"

The minister had grown a trifle vehement.

"There iss no harm in a glass!" said Angus McEachran, gloomily.

"There iss no harm in a glass!" retorted Mr. MacDonald, with impatience. "There iss no harm in a glass—ay, I know there iss no great harm in a glass if you will meet with a frient, and when the work iss tone, and then there iss no harm in a glass. But there iss a harm, and a ferry great harm, in it, Angus McEachran, if a young man will gif up his work and tek to trinking in the middle of the tay—and not a glass, no but a bottle—and it iss too much whiskey you hef trunk this tay, Angus McEachran."

The young man made no protestation, no excuse. He sat moodily contemplating the rocks before him. His companion, the father of the young man who had taken Angus' place in the boat, was uncomfortably conscious of guilt, and remained silent.

"I do not know," Angus said at

length, "I do not know, Mr. MacDonald, that I will go any more to the fishing."

"Hey!" cried the minister, "and iss it a madman you are, Angus McEachran? And what will you do, then, that you will go no more to the fishing?"

"It iss the son of Tonald Neil, here, who will pay me for my share in the poat, and he iss a ferry goot fisherman, and the other men will be ferry glat to hef him in the poat."

"Ay, and you?" said the minister, "what iss it you will do yourself, Angus McEachran?"

"I do not know," he said gloomily. "It iss not anything I hef the heart to do, unless it will be to go away to Glassgow; there iss not anything else I haf the heart to do."

"To Glassgow!" cried the minister, in angry excitement; "you, Angus McEachran! Ay, it iss once before I will stop you from going to Glassgow!"

"And that was ferry well done!" said the young fisherman, with a little laugh, "and there wass much goot came of it, that we did not go away to Glassgow. Well, Mr. MacDonald, I will say nothing against you for that. It iss no fault to you that Moira and me—well, it iss not any use the speaking of it."

The minister turned to the old man.

"Tonald Neil, get up on your feet, and go away ofer to the road there.

It iss a few words I hef to say to Angus McEachran."

The old man rose with some difficulty, and hobbled away over the rocks. No sooner had he gone than the minister, with an angry look in his face, caught up the black bottle, dashed it down on the rocks below, where the remaining whiskey spurted about in all directions.

"The teffle—and tam him!—let effery drop of the whiskey you will trink in the tays when you should be at the fishing, Angus McEachran, and you with a young wife—"

"A young wife!" cried the fisherman, bitterly (paying no attention to the destruction of the whiskey); "it iss no young wife I hef, Mr. MacDonald. It iss a young lass I haf marriet—yes, that iss true enough whateffer—but it iss a young lass that hass no thought for her husband, and hass no laugh or a joke at any time, and that sits by herself all the day, with her crying and her tiscontent, and will say no wort when you reason with her; and iss that a young wife? No, py Kott Mr. MacDonald, that iss no young wife—and why should I go to the fishing?"

"Ay, ay, Angus McEachran," said the minister, "this iss a ferry pad story you hef told me to-day, and it wass no thought I had of this when you were married ofer at the manse, and when Mrs. Laffenter will come back in the evening, and

when she was ferry sorry that John Fergus wass an angry man, I will be saying to her, 'Mrs. Laffenter, it wass effery one knew that pefore; and it wass no shame to you, and no fault to you, that he wass still a foolish man. And Moira Fergus, she will be petter, ay, and ferry much petter, to go and lif with Angus McEachran than with John Fergus, and it iss a ferry goot thing you hef done this tay, and it iss ferry kind of you to come all the way from Borva.'"

"Ay ay," said Angus," that wass well said, Mr. MacDonald; for who could hef told that this would come out of it?"

"But you must hef patience with the lass, Angus," the minister said, "and you will say a word to her—"

"I will say a word to her?" exclaimed Angus with a flash of fire in his eyes. Iss it one word, or fife huntret tousant words I hef said to her? No, I will say no more words to her—there hass been too much of that mirover. It iss to Glæssgow I am going, and then she will go back to her father—and tam him!"

"Then you will be a wicked man, Angus McEachran!" exclaimed the minister, "ay, a foolish and a wicked man, to think of such things! And what will you do in Glassgow?"

"I do not know."

"No, you do not know! You will take to the whiskey, that iss what you will do in Glassgow. Angus Mc-

Eachran, I tell you to put that out of your head; and when I come back from the school-house, ay, I will go and see Moira, and I will say a word to her, but not any word of your going to Glassgow, which iss a very foolish thing for a young man to think of."

He did as he had promised, and on the second time of his entering Angus McEachran's house he again found Moira alone, though she was now engaged in some domestic work.

"Well, well," he said to her, "it iss a goot thing for a young wife to be tiligent and look after the house; but there iss more as that that iss wanted of a young wife—and I hef just seen Angus McEachran, Moira."

"Ay," said the girl, "and hass he not gone out to the fishing."

"No, he hass not gone out to the fishing; and this iss what I hef to say to you, Moira, that unless you take care—ay, and ferry great care, ay—he will go out to the fishing not any more."

She looked up quickly and in fear.

"Is Angus ill?"

"Ill! Ay, he iss ill; but it iss not in his pody that he iss ill. He iss a fine, strong young man, and there iss many a young lass would hef been glad to hef Angus McEachran for her husband; and now that he iss marriet, it was you, Moira, that should be a good wife to him. And do you know why he iss not at the fishing?"

It iss bekass he hass no heart to go

to the fishing? And why should a young man hef no care for hiss work and hiss house?—unless this, Moira, that the house is not agreaple to him."

The girl sighed.

"I know that, Mr. MacDonald," she said. "It iss many's the time Angus will say that to me."

"And in Kott's name then, Moira," said the minister indignantly, "why will you not mek the house lighter for him? Iss it nothing to you that your husband will hef a dull house, ay, and a house that will trife him into idleness such as no young man in Ardtilleach would speak of? Iss it nothing to you, Moira?"

The girl turned to him, with her eyes full of tears.

"Iss it nothing to me, Mr. MacDonald? Ay, it iss a great teal to to me. And it iss many the time I will say to myself that I will heed no more the quarrel with my father, and that if he will go by in the fillage without a look or a word, that will be nothing to me. But it iss ferry easy, Mr. MacDonald, to say such things to yourself; and it iss not so ferry easy for a young lass to hef a quarrel with her father, and that all the neighpours will see there iss a quarrel, and not a look or a word between them not any more ass if they wass strangers to each other. Ay, ay, that iss no light thing for a young lass—"

"Well, I hef no patience with you,

Moira," said the minister. "Wass not all this pefore you when you wass getting marriet?"

"Ay," said the girl, with another sigh, "that iss a true word. But there are many things that you will expect, and you will not know what they are until they hef come to you, Mr. MacDonald, and—and—"

"Well, well, well!" said the minister, rather testily, "now that it hass come to you, Moira, what iss the use of fretting, and fretting."

"There iss not any use in it, Mr. MacDonald," she said, simply. "But it is not effery one will be aple to put aside things out of the mind—no, that iss not easy to do."

He stood about for a minute or two, impatient, angry, and conscious that all his reasoning and arguments were of no avail.

"I will go ofer to the curing-house," said he, "and hef a word with your father."

"Mr. MacDonald, you will hef the trouble for nothing. What will you do when Miss Sheila Mackenzie will not be aple to do anything? And it iss many a one in the fillage hass gone to my father—and it iss always the same—he will hear no word of me; and if they hef peen anxious and ferry anxious then he will get ferry angry, and they hef come away more afrait of him than effer. No, that iss no use, Mr. MacDonald, the going to my father at the curing-house."

"Then it iss a last word I hef to say to you, Moira," said the minister in an altered tone, as he stepped forward and took her hand. "You are a good lass, and you are not willing to do harm to any one. It iss a great harm you are doing to Angus McEachran — ay, indeed, Moira, you hef goot cause to wonder—but that iss true, and it iss a great harm you are doing to yourself. For if there iss no lightness in the house, a young man will not stay in the house, and if his wife iss always fretting and hass no laugh for him when he comes home, he will hef it in his heart not to come to the house at all, and that iss ferry pad for a young man. And you must try, Moira, to get rid of your fretting, or you will be ferry sorry one tay that you tit not get rid of your fretting. Now, good-bye, Moira; and mind what I hef said to you this tay."

So the minister left, not in a very hopeful or happy mood. As he passed the house of John Fergus, he frowned; and then he remembered that he had not checked Angus McEachran for using a certain phrase about John Fergus.

"Well, well," thought Mr. MacDonald, "it is no great matter; and if I was Angus McEachran perhaps it iss the same words I would be for using, whether the minister was there or no."

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE DEEPS.

THINGS went from bad to worse, and that rapidly. Moira knew but little of what was going on, for the neighbors were slow to tell her. But every one in Ardtilleach was aware that Angus McEachran had sold his share in the boat to young Donald Neil ; and that, while this ready money lasted, he had done no work at all, but merely lounged about until he could get hold of one or two companions to go off on a drinking frolic. Moira saw him go out each day ; she did not know but that he was gone to the fishing. When he returned late at night, she sometimes saw that he had been having a glass, and she was a little perturbed. But Angus had a strong head ; and he managed to conceal from her for a long time the fashion in which he was spending his life.

He did not deliberately set to work to drink himself and his young wife out of house and home. He had fits of remorse, and always was about to turn over a new leaf—next day ; but the next day came and Moira was silent and sad, and then he would go out to get a cheerful word with some companions, and a glass. Moreover, the savings of a fisherman either increase or decrease ; they never stand still. When the motive was taken away for the

steady addition to the little hoard in the bank at Stornoway, that fund itself was in danger. And at length it became known in Ardtilleach that Angus McEachran had squandered that also, and that now, if he wanted money, he must go into debt with one of the curers, and hire himself out for one of the curers' boats.

The appearance of the man altered too. He had been rather a smart young fellow, careful of his clothes and cleanly in his habits ; now, as Moira noticed, he paid less attention to these things, and heeded her not when she remonstrated.

One night Angus McEachran came home, and staggered into the cottage. Moira regarded him with affright. He sate down on a wooden stool by the peat-fire.

"Now there iss an end of it," said he, gloomily.

"An end of what, Angus ?" said she, in great alarm.

"An end of you, and of me, and of Ardtilleach ; and it iss not in Ardtilleach I can lif any more, but it iss to Glassgow that I am going."

"To Glassgow !" she cried.

"Ay," said he, "this iss no longer any place for me. I hef no share in the boat. I hef no money in the bank. It iss all gone away—in the tammed whiskey—and it iss not a farthing of money I can get from any one—and what iss to become of you, Moira ?"

She did not cry aloud, nor were

her eyes wet with tears, but she sate with a white face, trying to comprehend the ruin that had befallen them.

"It iss not the truth you are speaking, Angus McEachran!" she said somewhat wildly.

"It iss the truth ass if it were spoken before Kott," said he, "and now you will hef something more to cry ofer. Well, I am sorry for you, Moira. It wass another thing I looked for when we were marriet; but now it iss no use my living in Ardtilleach, and it iss to Glassgow I am going."

Moira was rocking herself on the chair, and sobbing and moaning in her great grief. It was true, then. They were ruined; and to whom could she turn for protection? The friends who had come to her wedding were now away in London. As for her father, she might as well have thought of appealing to the rocks on the shore.

"Angus, Angus!" she cried, "you will stay in Ardtilleach! You will not go to Glassgow! It iss many another boat that will be glad to hef you, and there iss no one can mek so much at the fishing ass you—"

"And what iss the goot of it," he said, "that a man will mek money, and hef to lif a hard life to mek money, and when he comes home, then it iss not like coming home to him at all? What I hef done that wass bad enough; what you hef

done, Moira Fergus, well it iss something of this that you hef done."

She dared not answer — some strange consciousness oppressed her. She went away from him, and sate in a corner, and cried bitterly. He spoke no more to her that night.

Next morning he was in a very different humor; he was discontented, quarrelsome, and for the first time of their married life spoke rudely and tauntingly to her. The knowledge that he was now a beggar — that the neighbors regarded him as an outcast—that his old companions in the boat were away at their work, leaving him a despicable idler to consort with the old men about—seemed to drive him to desperation. Hitherto he had always said, in answer to friendly remonstrances, that there were more fish in the sea than ever came out of it; and that by and by he would set to work again. Now it seemed to occur to him that his former companions were rather shy of him; and that he had a bad name throughout the island.

"Yes," said he angrily to her, "when I go to Glassgow, then you can go to your father, and you can ask him to tek you back to his house. It wass my house that wass not goot enough for you; and from the morning to the night it wass neffer a smile or a laugh wass on your face; and now when I will go away to Glassgow, you will be a

great deal petter, ay, and fery much petter in the house of your father, John Fergus—and tam him !”

She said not a word in reply, for her heart was full ; but she put a shawl round her shoulders and walked away over to the curing-house, where her father was. Angus McEachran was mad with rage. Was she already taking him at his word ; and seeking to return to her father's house. With a wild feeling of vengeance at his heart, he determined there and then to leave the place ; and as he set out from Ardtilleach, without a word of good-bye to any one in it, the last thing that he saw was John Fergus coming out to the door of the curing-house to speak to Moira. With many an angry and silent imprecation, he strode along the rough road, and then he began to bethink himself, how a penniless man was to make his way to distant Stornoway and to Glasgow.

The purpose of Moira Fergus was quite different from that which her husband had imagined.

“What, will you war with me?” said her father, coldly, when he came out in response to her message. “I hef told you, Moira Fergus, that it iss no word I hef for you. You hef gone to another house ; you shall stay there—ay, if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years.”

“It iss Angus McEachran,” she

said, with tears in her eyes, “and—and—he iss going away to Glassgow if he cannot go to the fishing—and—if you would speak a word to Mr Maclean—”

“Ay, he iss going to Glassgow?” said John Fergus, with an angry flash in his eyes. “And the tefle only knows that he iss fit for nothing but the going to Glassgow. Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, and it wass a prout tay for you, the tay you were marriet to Angus McEachran ; but it iss not a prout tay any more, that you are married to a man that iss a peggar and a trunkard, and hass not a penny in ta whole world ; no, it iss not any longer a prout tay for you that you marriet Angus McEachran !”

She would take no heed to these hard words ; her purpose to save her husband was too earnest.

“Ay, ay, that wass a bad day,” Moira said, sadly, “and if I had known, I would not hef married Angus McEachran ; but now, father, it would be ferry kind of you to speak a word to Mr. Maclean—”

“For Angus McEachran?” said her father, with a savage scowl ; “not if he wass to be tammed the morn's mornin' !”

Moira shuddered—her last hope was slowly leaving her.

“You would not hef the neighbors,” she pleaded, “you would not hef the neighbors say you wass a hard man, father, and it iss not any

“No one would say a word like yourself to Mr. Maclean; and Mr. Maclean will know that Angus McEachran iss a ferry goot fisherman and ferry cleffer with his hands, and if he would gif Angus a share in a poat, it would be ferry soon he would be paid back for that, for there iss not any one in the island can make parrels like him—”

“And it iss a foolish lass you are that you will come to me to speak to Mr. Maclean for Angus McEachran. Iss it any cause I hef to speak for Angus McEachran? And ferry much I would hef to say for him, and the whole of Ardtilleach and the whole of the islands will know of his trinking, and his trinking, and not any work, no more ass if he wass an old man or a rich man, and the money going from him until it iss not a penny of it that is left!”

“But—”

“And there iss more, Moira Fergus,” continued her father, vehemently. “I will say to you many’s the time I hef no word for you—”

“But only this once—”

“Only this teffle! I tell you to go away, Moira Fergus, and not to come pothering me with your Mr. Maclean’s and your Angus McEachrans! Let him go to the men that hass been trinking his whiskey! Let him go to the man who hass his share in the poat. But not to me!”

“Father—”

“I hef told you, Moira Fergus,” John Fergus said, recovering from his rage, “that it is no word will pass between us; and this is an end of it.”

With that he turned and went into the curing-house, slamming the door after him.

“And it iss a hard man you are,” said Moira, sadly.

She walked back to her own little cottage, almost fearing that her husband might be inside. He was not; so she entered, and sat down to contemplate the miserable future that lay before her, and to consider what she could do to induce Angus McEachran to remain in Ardtilleach, and take to the fishing and sober ways again.

First of all she thought of writing to her friends in London; but Angus had the address, and she dared not ask him for it. Then she thought of making a pilgrimage all the way to Borva to beg of the great Mackenzie there to bring his influence to bear on her husband and on Mr. Maclean, the curer, so that some arrangement might be made between them. But how could she, all by herself, make her way to Borva? And where might Angus McEachran be by the time she came back?

Meanwhile Angus was not about the village, nor yet out on the rocks, nor yet down in the little harbor; so, with a sad heart enough, she pre-

pared her frugal mid-day meal, and sate down to that by herself. She had no great desire for food, for she was crying most of the time.

Late that evening a neighbor came in, who said she had just returned from Harrabost.

"Ay, Moira," said she, "and what iss wrong now, that Angus McEachran will be for going away from Ardtilleach?"

Moira stared at her.

"I do not know what you mean, Mrs. Cameron," she said.

"You do not know, then? You hef not heard the news, that Angus McEachran will be away to Glasgow?"

Moira started up with a quick cry. Her first thought was to rush out of the house to overtake him and turn him back; but how was that possible?

"Oh, Mrs. Cameron, what iss it you tell me this tay? And where tit you see Angus? And are you quite sure?"

"Well, well, Moira," said the old woman, "it iss not any great matter the going to Glassgow; and if you will sit down now, I will tell you."

The girl sate down, silently, and crossed her hands on her lap. There was no more crying now; the last blow had fallen, and despair had supervened.

"You know, Moira, my son that lifs round at the pack of Harrabost, and I was ofer to see him, and all

wass ferry well, and his wife has got ferry well through her trouple. And when I wass for coming away, it wass Angus McEachran will come running up to the house, and ferry wild he wass in the look of him. 'Duncan Cameron,' says he, 'will you gif me your poat for two minutes or for three minutes, for I am told that this is the McAlisters' poat that iss coming along, and they are going to Taransay.' You know the McAlisters' poat, Moira, that they pought at Styornoway?"

Moira nodded assent.

"Well, you know, Moira, that Duncan was always a good frient to Angus McEachran; and he said, 'Yes, Angus McEachran, you may hef the poat, and she is down at the shore, and you can run her out yourself, for the oars and the tholepins are in her.' But Angus McEachran, he says, 'Duncan, will you come with me to pring pack the poat, for I will ask the McAlisters to tek me with them to Taransay; for it iss to Taransay I am going.'"

"Ay, to Taransay!" said Moira, eagerly. "And it wass only to Taransay?"

"I will tell you that, Moira," the old woman continued, "who would narrate her story in her own way. 'Well, well, I went to him, and I said, 'What iss it that takes you to Taransay, Angus McEachran, and when will you be coming pack from Taransay?' 'Mrs. Cameron,' says

he, 'I do not know when I will be coming pack from Taransay, for it iss to Glassgow I am going ; and it iss perhaps that I will neffer see Ardtilleach any more.' "

"No, no, no," the girl moaned ; "he did not say that, Mrs. Cameron !"

"And I said to him, 'It iss a foolish man you are, Angus McEachran, to speak such things, and you with a young wife in Ardtilleach. 'Ay,' said he, 'Mrs. Cameron, and if there was no young wife, it iss perhaps that I would be in Ardtilleach now, and hef my money and the share in the poat ; but it is a pad tay the tay that a young man marries a lass that iss tiscontented and hass no heart in the house, and that iss it that I am going away from Ardtilleach ; and Moira—well, Moira hass her father in Ardtilleach.' Ay, that iss what he said to me, Moira, ass Duncan and him they were putting out the poat from the shore."

"My father !" the girl murmured, "I hef not any father now—no, and not any husband—it iss the two that I hef lost. Ay, and Angus McEachran hass gone away to Glassgow."

There was no bitter wailing and lamentation ; only the hands in her lap were more tightly clenched. The red peats flickered up in the dusk ; and her face seemed drawn and haggard.

"Ay, and they pulled out to the McAlisters' poat when she came by, and I wass looking at them all the time from the shore, and Angus McEachran, when the McAlisters put their poat apout, he got apoard of her, and there wass not much talking petween them. And Duncan, I could hear him cry out, 'Good-pye to you this tay, Angus McEachran !' And Angus he cried out, 'Goot-pye to you, Duncan Cameron !' And when Duncan he came back to the shore, he will tell me that the McAlisters were going down to the ferry pig poat that iss at Taransay and that hass come round from Lochnamaddy, and Angus McEachran he wass saying that he would know some of the sailors in her, and the captain would tek him to Glassgow if he worked the passage. Ay, ay, Moira, I can see it iss not the good news I hef prought to you this night ; and it iss a pad thing for a young lass when her husband goes away to Glassgow ; but you do not know yet that he will stay in Glassgow, and you will write a line to him, Moira—"

"How can I write a line to him, Mrs. Cameron !" the girl said ; "there iss more people in Glassgow ass there iss in Styornoway, and the Lewis, and Harris all put together ; and how will they know which of them is Angus McEachran ?"

"Then you will send the letter to Styornoway, and you will gif it to the captain of the great poat, the Clansman ; and iss there any one in Glassgow that he will not know ?"

"A letter," Moira said, wistfully. "There iss no letter that will bring Angus McEachran pack, not now that he hass gone away from Ardtilleach. And I will say good-night to you now, Mrs. Cameron. It iss a little tired I am."

"You are not ferry well the night, Moira," said the old woman, looking at her. "I do not know that I will leaf you by yourself the night."

"But I will ferry much rather be by myself, Mrs. Cameron—ay, ay, I hef many things to think ofer ; and it iss in the morning I will come to see you, Mrs. Cameron, for I am thinking of going to Glassgow."

"Ay, you will come to me in the morning, like a good lass," said Mrs. Cameron, "and then you will think no more of going to Glassgow, which would be a foolish thing for a young lass, and it iss not yet, no, nor to-morrow, nor any time we will let you do such a foolish thing, and go away from Ardtilleach."

CHAPTER X.

A PROCLAMATION.

MOIRA did not go to Glassgow ; she remained in Ardtilleach, in the small cottage all by herself, whither

one or two of the neighbors, having a great pity for her condition, came to her, and occasionally brought her a little present of tea or sugar. How she managed to live at all, no one knew ; but she was very proud, and maintained to those who visited her that she was well off and content. She was very clever with her needle, and in this way requited her friends for any little kindness they showed her.

So the days and the weeks went by, and nothing was heard of Angus McEachran. Mr. MacDonald made inquiries of the men who had gone with him to Taransay, and they said he had undertaken to work his passage to Glassgow in a boat that was going round the island for salt fish. That was all they knew.

Well, Mr. MacDonald was not a rich man, and he had a small house ; but his heart was touched by the mute misery of this poor lass who was living in the cottage all by herself, as one widowed, or an out-cast from her neighbors. So he went to her and asked her to come over to the manse and stay there until something should be heard of her husband.

"It is a ferry goot man you are. Mr. MacDonald," she said, "and a ferry kind man you hef been, always and now too, to me ; but I cannot go with you to the manse."

"Kott pless me," he cried, impatiently. "How can you lif all

by yourself? It iss not goot for a young lass to lif all by herself."

"Ay, ay, Mr. MacDonald, and sometimes it is ferry goot; for she will begin to go back ofer what hass passed, and she will know where she wass wrong, and if there iss punishment for that, she will take the punishment to herself."

"And where should the punishment be coming," said he, warmly, "if not to the young man who would go away to Glassgow and leaf a young wife without money, without anything, after he has trank all the money!"

"You do not know—you do not know, Mr. MacDonald," she said sadly, and shaking her head. Then she added, almost wildly, "Ay, Mr. MacDonald, and you hef no word against the young wife that will trife her husband into the trinking, and trife him away from his own house and the place he was porn, and all his frients, and the poat that he had, and will trife him away to Glassgow—and you hef no word against that, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Well, it iss all ofer, Moira," said he, gently. "And what iss the use now of your lifeing here by yourself; and when your peats are finished who will go out and cut the peats for you?"

"I can cut the peats for myself, Mr. MacDonald," said she, simply; "and it iss one or two of the neigh-

bors they will cut some peats for me, for on the warm tays it iss little I hef to do, and I can go out and turn their peats for them."

"You will be better ofer at the manse, Moira."

"It iss ferry kind you are, Mr. MacDonald; but I will not go ofer to the manse."

In his dire perplexity Mr. MacDonald went away back to the manse, and spent a portion of the evening in writing a long and beautifully-worded letter to Mrs. Lavender, the young married lady who had been present at Moira's wedding, and who was now in London. If Mr. MacDonald's spoken English was peculiar in pronunciation, his written English was accurate enough; and to add a grace to it, and show that he was not merely an undisciplined islander, he introduced into it a scrap or two of Latin. He treated the story of Moira and her husband from a high literary point of view. He invited the attention of the great lady in London to this incident in the humble annals of the poor. She would doubtless remember, amid the gayeties of the world of fashion, and in the thousand distractions of the vast metropolis, the simple ceremony of which she had been a spectator in the distant islands, which, if they were not the *nitentes Cycladas* of the Roman bard—and so forth. Mr. MacDon-

ald was proud of this composition. He sealed it up with great care, and addressed it to "The Hon. Mrs. Lavender" at her house in London.

An answer came with surprising swiftness. Mr. MacDonald was besought to convoy Moira forthwith to the Island of Borva, where the wife of Mr. Mackenzie's keeper would give her something to do about Mrs. Lavender's house. Mr. and Mrs. Lavender would be back in the Hebrides in about three weeks. If the rains had been heavy, Moira was to keep fires in all the rooms of the house, especially the bedroom, incessantly. And Mrs. Lavender charged Mr. MacDonald with the fulfilment of these her commands. He was in no wise to fail to have Moira McEachran removed from her solitary cottage to the spacious house at Borva.

The minister was a proud man the day he went over to Ardtilleach with this warrant in his hand. Would Moira withstand him now? Indeed the girl yielded to all this show of authority; and humbly and gratefully, and silently she set to work to put together the few things she possessed, so that she might leave the village in which she was born. Indeed she went away from Ardtilleach with little regret. Her life there had not been happy. She went round to a few of the cottages to bid good-by to

her neighbors; and when it became known to John Fergus that his daughter was going away to Borva, he instantly departed for Killeena, on some mission or another, and remained there the whole day, so that she should not see him before leaving.

She remained a couple of days at the manse, waiting for a boat; and then, when the chance served, the minister himself went with her to Borva, and took her up to the house of Mr. Mackenzie, who was called the King of that Island. After a few friendly words from the great man—who then took Mr. MacDonald away with him, that they might have a talk over the designs of Prussia, the new bridge on the road to the Butt of Lewis, and other matters of great public importance—Moira was handed over to the keeper's wife, who was housekeeper there. She did not know what she had done to be received with so much friendliness and kindness; she was not aware, indeed, that a letter from London had preceded her arrival.

She slept in Mr. Mackenzie's house, and she had her meals there, but most of the day she spent in the empty house to which Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were shortly coming. What she could do in the way of preparing the place for their reception, she did right willingly. There was never a more devoted servant; and her gratitude towards those who

befriended her was on many occasions too much for her English—she had to escape into the Gaelic.

Then there was a great stir throughout the island, for every one knew that Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were on their way from London; and the wonderful wagonette—which was in effect a boat placed on wheels, with oars and everything complete—that Mr. Lavender had built for himself, was, one morning, taken down Loch Roag, and landed at Callernish, and driven across to Stornoway. The Clansman was coming in that day.

It was in the dusk of the evening that the party from London—there were one or two strangers—arrived in the little bay underneath Mrs. Lavender's house, and walked up the steep incline, the luggage following on the shoulders of the sailors. And the very first words that Mrs. Lavender uttered on entering the house were—

“Where is Moira Fergus?”

The girl was greatly afraid to find herself in the presence of all these people; and Mrs. Lavender, seeing that, quickly took her aside, into a room where they were by themselves. Moira was crying.

“And you have not heard anything more of him, Moira?” she asked.

“No, I hef no word at all,” the girl said, “and I do not look for that now, not any more, I hef lost

effery one now, both my father and my husband, and it iss myself that hass done it; and when I think of it all, I will say to myself that neffer any one wass alive that hass done as I hef done—”

“No, no, no, Moira,” her friend said, “it is not so bad as that. Mr. MacDonald wrote to me that you fretted a great deal, and that Angus was very impatient, and he does not know what made him go to Glasgow, for how could that make it any better? But we will find him for you, Moira?”

“You will find him,” the girl said sadly; “and what if you will find him? He will neffer come back to Ardtilleach. You do not know all about it, Mrs. Laffenter—no, I am sure Mr. MacDonald is a ferry kind man, and he would not tell you all about it. And this is why Angus McEachran will go away to Glasgow—that he hat trank all the money there was in the bank at Styornoway, and he hat no more a share in the poat, and he wass ashamed to go about Ardtilleach. And all that wass my doing—indeed it wass—”

“Well, well, you must give up fretting about it, Moira, and we will get Angus back to Ardtilleach, or back to Borva—”

“But you do not know, Mrs. Laffenter,” the girl said, in an excited and despairing way; “you do not know the harm that wass done to Angus McEachran! And will he

effe get back from that—from the trinking, and the trinking, and I myself with ferry little thought of it at Ardtilleach? And where iss he now? And what iss he doing? It wass no more care for his life that he had when he went away from Ardtilleach!”

“Well, well, Moira,” said her friend, soothingly, “if you were to blame for part of it all, you have suffered a great deal; and so has he, for it is not a happy thing for a man to go away from a young wife, and go away among strangers, without any friend, or occupation, or money. You seem to have got into a bad plight at Ardtilleach—perhaps it was better to have it broken up like that. It was certainly a great pity that you did not discover all you know now before things came to their worst; but if they are at their worst, they must mend, you know. So you must not give up hope just yet.”

Moira suddenly recollected herself.

“I am keeping you from your frients, Mrs. Laffenter,” said she; “and it iss ferry kind of you, but I do not wish that you will be troubled apout me and Angus McEachran. And I hef not thanked you for sending me here; and I do not know how to do that; but it iss not bekass I hef no feeling apout it that I cannot thank you, Mrs. Laffenter.”

She was a servant in the house;

she would not shake hands with Mrs. Lavender. But her mistress took her hand, and said, with a great kindness in her face—

“I will say good-night to you now, Moira, for I may not see you again to-night. And to-morrow morning, you will come to me, and I will tell you what can be done about Angus McEachran.”

That evening, after dinner, Mrs. Lavender told the story to her guests from London; and she was obviously greatly distressed about it; but her husband said—

“The young fellow had no money; he is bound to be in Glasgow. We can easily get at him by advertising in the papers; and if you can persuade him to come to Borva, we shall have plenty of work for him, for he is a clever carpenter. But if he has enlisted—”

“I propose,” said one of the guests, a young American lady, recently married, “I propose that, if he has enlisted, we, who are here now, subscribe to buy him out.”

Her husband, a less impulsive and more practical person, got a piece of paper, and wrote these words on it:

Should this meet the eye of Angus McEachran, Ardtilleach, in the Island of Darroch, he will hear of something to his advantage by communicating at once with Mrs. Lavender, Sea-view, Island of Borva, Hebrides.

CHAPTER XI.

A PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS.

It would have been strange, indeed, if Angus McEachran had missed seeing this advertisement, for it was in all the Glasgow newspapers, morning after morning. It happened that late one night, he was in a miserable little public house near the Broomielaw, with two or three companions. He was now a very different man from the smart young fisherman who had lived at Ardtilleach. The ravages of drink were everywhere visible in his face, in his shabby dress, in his trembling hand. He was at the moment sullen and silent, though his companions, who were Highlanders employed about the harbor, were talking excitedly enough, in their native tongue.

McEachran had also got occasional work about the ships; but he stuck to it only until he had earned a few shillings, and then he went off on a fresh drinking bout. There were always plenty of "loafers" about to join him; he became a familiar figure in all the small public houses about; and in garrulous moments he had told his companions something of his history, so that both himself and the circumstances of his leaving his native place were widely known.

On this evening the landlord of

the public house came into the den in which the Highlandmen were drinking, and said, pointing to a portion of the newspaper he held in his hands.

"Is this no you, McEachran?"

Angus McEachran took the newspaper, and read the lines pointed out.

"Ay, it iss me," he said.

"Man, there's something there for ye!" the publican said. "Can-na ye read it? They've gotten some money for ye, as sure as ye're a leevin sinner!"

"It iss no money they hef for me," said McEachran; "it is these ferry grand people, and they will want me to go pack to Ardtilleach. No, I hef had enough, and plenty, and more ass that of Ardtilleach. The teffle will tek the tay that I go pack to Ardtilleach!"

"Ye're a fulish cratur, man. Do ye think they wud gang to the awfu' expense o' advertisin' in the newspapers if there wasna something gran' waitin' for ye?"

"Go and tam you, John Jameson, and go and pring me another mutchkin of your pad whiskey, that iss not fit to be put before swines."

The landlord did not care to quarrel with a good customer. He went off to get the whiskey; merely saying, in an undertone.

"They Hielanmen, they've nae mair manners, than a stot; but

they're the deevils to swallow whiskey."

He took no notice of the advertisement ; he did not even care to speculate on what it might mean. Had Angus McEachran parted from his wife merely through some fierce quarrel, and had he resolved to go to Glasgow as a measure of revenge, the prospect of a reconciliation might have been welcome. But it was not so. He had left Ardtilleach simply out of sheer despair. He had drank all his money ; he had disgraced himself in the eyes of his neighbors ; he had long ago abandoned any notion of having any real companionship with his wife. Besides, by this time he had acquired the drunkard's craving ; and in Glasgow, provided he could get any sort of work, he would be able to do as he pleased with his money. When he got to Glasgow he abandoned himself to drinking without any remorse. His chances in life were gone ; there remained but this. He had no boat, no home, no relatives ; his society was in the public house ; the one enjoyable experience of the day was the sensation of beatific stupor rising into his head after drinking repeated doses of whiskey. If he was ill and surly next morning, there was little sense of shame mingled with his mood. Nor did he consider himself a very ill-used person, whose wrongs ought to ex-

cite compassion. He simply was what he was, as the natural result of what had gone before ; and he looked neither to the past nor to the future. It was enough if he had the wherewithal in his pocket to pay for another dram ; and he did not care to ask whether, in the by-gone time, he was the injuring or the injured party.

But it became more difficult for him to get those odd jobs about the quays, for his unsteady habits were notorious, and no one could depend on his remaining sober for a single day. He became shabbier and shabbier in appearance ; and now the winter was coming on, and many a day he shivered with the cold as he walked aimlessly about the streets. When he could get no work, and when he had no money with which to go into a public house, he would often wander idly along the inner thoroughfares of the town, perhaps with some vague hope of meeting an acquaintance who would give him a glass. He was not afraid of meeting any of his old friends from Ardtilleach ; they could not have recognized him.

One night he was going up Candleriggs street in this aimless fashion, and a bitterly cold night it was. A north-east wind was blowing down the thoroughfares, driving a stinging sleet before it ; even the hardiest were glad to escape indoors from such weather. Angus Mc-

Eachran was not proof against cold and wet, as he had been in former days. He shivered like a reed in the wind; his limbs were chilled; if he had not been in the semi-be-mused state of the confirmed drunkard, he would have crept back to his miserable lodging. As it was, his only thought at the moment was to get a little shelter from the bitter wind.

He came to the entrance into the City Hall, and here was an open space, the light of which promised something of warmth. There were a great many people going in; and "Free Admission" stared every one in the face. McEachran crept into a corner, glad to be out of the cold for a moment.

The mere going by of people seemed to have a fascination for him. His head was dazed. When a friendly old gentleman in passing said, "Weel, ma man, are ye no comin' in? I dinna think you could do better," he answered, vaguely, "Yes," and joined the stream. There was a great crush; he was borne into the hall. So dense was the crowd that no one seemed to notice his shabby clothes. He got no seat, but he was well propped up; and the heat of the great assembly began to thaw his frozen limbs.

And who was this maniac and mountebank on the platform—this short, stout, ungainly man, with lank yellow hair, prominent front

teeth, and exceedingly long arms which he flung about as he stamped up and down and ranted? Truly, he was a ridiculous-looking person; and it was no wonder that highly-cultivated people, who read the reviews, and went into mild frenzy over blue and white china, and were agitated about the Eastern position, should refuse to go and hear this stump orator who was lecturing on temperance all over the country. The stories told of his *ad captandum* vulgarity and his irreverence, were shocking. Jokes were made about the wild fashion in which he delt with his h's; although, being a Yorkshireman of inferior education, he never added an h, he simply ignored the letter altogether, and was profoundly unconscious of doing so. He spoke with a strong north-country accent; he marched up and down the platform, with perspiration on his unlovely face; he sawed the air with his arms, and was by turns, angry with a screeching anger and pathetic with a theatrical effusiveness. A person of refined taste could not approve of Mr. Robert J. Davis and his oratory. The exhibition was altogether too absurd. And yet there are in this country at present thousands of human beings whom that man rescued from ruin; there are thousands of homes which he restored to peace and happiness, after that seemed impossible; there are thousands of women who

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE DEEPS.

THINGS went from bad to worse, and that rapidly. Moira knew but little of what was going on, for the neighbors were slow to tell her. But every one in Ardtilleach was aware that Angus McEachran had sold his share in the boat to young Donald Neil ; and that, while this ready money lasted, he had done no work at all, but merely lounged about until he could get hold of one or two companions to go off on a drinking frolic. Moira saw him go out each day ; she did not know but that he was gone to the fishing. When he returned late at night, she sometimes saw that he had been having a glass, and she was a little perturbed. But Angus had a strong head ; and he managed to conceal from her for a long time the fashion in which he was spending his life.

He did not deliberately set to work to drink himself and his young wife out of house and home. He had fits of remorse, and always was about to turn over a new leaf—next day ; but the next day came and Moira was silent and sad, and then he would go out to get a cheerful word with some companions, and a glass. Moreover, the savings of a fisherman either increase or decrease ; they never stand still. When the motive was taken away for the

steady addition to the little hoard in the bank at Stornoway, that fund itself was in danger. And at length it became known in Ardtilleach that Angus McEachran had squandered that also, and that now, if he wanted money, he must go into debt with one of the curers, and hire himself out for one of the curers' boats.

The appearance of the man altered too. He had been rather a smart young fellow, careful of his clothes and cleanly in his habits ; now, as Moira noticed, he paid less attention to these things, and heeded her not when she remonstrated.

One night Angus McEachran came home, and staggered into the cottage. Moira regarded him with affright. He sate down on a wooden stool by the peat-fire.

"Now there iss an end of it," said he, gloomily.

"An end of what, Angus ?" said she, in great alarm.

"An end of you, and of me, and of Ardtilleach ; and it iss not in Ardtilleach I can lif any more, but it iss to Glassgow that I am going."

"To Glassgow !" she cried.

"Ay," said he, "this iss no longer any place for me. I hef no share in the boat. I hef no money in the bank. It iss all gone away—in the tammed whiskey—and it iss not a farthing of money I can get from any one—and what iss to become of you, Moira ?"

She did not cry aloud, nor were

her eyes wet with tears, but she sate with a white face, trying to comprehend the ruin that had befallen them.

"It iss not the truth you are speaking, Angus McEachran!" she said somewhat wildly.

"It iss the truth ass if it were spoken before Kott," said he, "and now you will hef something more to cry ofer. Well, I am sorry for you, Moira. It wass another thing I looked for when we were marriet; but now it iss no use my living in Ardtilleach, and it iss to Glassgow I am going."

Moira was rocking herself on the chair, and sobbing and moaning in her great grief. It was true, then. They were ruined; and to whom could she turn for protection? The friends who had come to her wedding were now away in London. As for her father, she might as well have thought of appealing to the rocks on the shore.

"Angus, Angus!" she cried, "you will stay in Ardtilleach! You will not go to Glassgow! It iss many another boat that will be glad to hef you, and there iss no one can mek so much at the fishing ass you—"

"And what iss the goot of it," he said, "that a man will mek money, and hef to lif a hard life to mek money, and when he comes home, then it iss not like coming home to him at all? What I hef done that wass bad enough; what you hef

done, Moira Fergus, well it iss something of this that you hef done."

She dared not answer — some strange consciousness oppressed her. She went away from him, and sate in a corner, and cried bitterly. He spoke no more to her that night.

Next morning he was in a very different humor; he was discontented, quarrelsome, and for the first time of their married life spoke rudely and tauntingly to her. The knowledge that he was now a beggar — that the neighbors regarded him as an outcast—that his old companions in the boat were away at their work, leaving him a despicable idler to consort with the old men about—seemed to drive him to desperation. Hitherto he had always said, in answer to friendly remonstrances, that there were more fish in the sea than ever came out of it; and that by and by he would set to work again. Now it seemed to occur to him that his former companions were rather shy of him; and that he had a bad name throughout the island.

"Yes," said he angrily to her, "when I go to Glassgow, then you can go to your father, and you can ask him to tek you back to his house. It wass my house that wass not goot enough for you; and from the morning to the night it wass neffer a smile or a laugh wass on your face; and now when I will go away to Glassgow, you will be a

great deal petter, ay, and fery much petter in the house of your father, John Fergus—and tam him !”

She said not a word in reply, for her heart was full ; but she put a shawl round her shoulders and walked away over to the curing-house, where her father was. Angus McEachran was mad with rage. Was she already taking him at his word ; and seeking to return to her father's house. With a wild feeling of vengeance at his heart, he determined there and then to leave the place ; and as he set out from Ardtilleach, without a word of good-bye to any one in it, the last thing that he saw was John Fergus coming out to the door of the curing-house to speak to Moira. With many an angry and silent imprecation, he strode along the rough road, and then he began to bethink himself, how a penniless man was to make his way to distant Stornoway and to Glasgow.

The purpose of Moira Fergus was quite different from that which her husband had imagined.

“What, will you war with me ?” said her father, coldly, when he came out in response to her message. “I hef told you, Moira Fergus, that it iss no word I hef for you. You hef gone to another house ; you shall stay there—ay, if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years.”

“It iss Angus McEachran,” she

said, with tears in her eyes, “and—and—he iss going away to Glassgow if he cannot go to the fishing—and—if you would speak a word to Mr. Maclean—”

“Ay, he iss going to Glassgow ?” said John Fergus, with an angry flash in his eyes. “And the tefle only knows that he iss fit for nothing but the going to Glassgow. Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, and it wass a prout tay for you, the tay you were marriet to Angus McEachran ; but it iss not a prout tay any more, that you are married to a man that iss a peggar and a trunkard, and hass not a penny in ta whole world ; no, it iss not any longer a prout tay for you that you marriet Angus McEachran !”

She would take no heed to these hard words ; her purpose to save her husband was too earnest.

“Ay, ay, that wass a bad day,” Moira said, sadly, “and if I had known, I would not hef married Angus McEachran ; but now, father, it would be ferry kind of you to speak a word to Mr. Maclean—”

“For Angus McEachran ?” said her father, with a savage scowl ; “not if he wass to be tammed the morn's mornin' !”

Moira shuddered—her last hope was slowly leaving her.

“You would not hef the neighbors,” she pleaded, “you would not hef the neighbors say you wass a hard man, father, and it iss not any

One would say a word like yourself to Mr. Maclean ; and Mr. Maclean will know that Angus McEachran iss a ferry goot fisherman and ferry cleffer with his hands, and if he would gif Angus a share in a poat, it would be ferry soon he would be paid back for that, for there iss not any one in the island can make parrels like him—”

“ And it iss a foolish lass you are that you will come to me to speak to Mr. Maclean for Angus McEachran. Iss it any cause I hef to speak for Angus McEachran ? And ferry much I would hef to say for him, and the whole of Ardtilleach and the whole of the islands will know of his trinking, and his trinking, and not any work, no more ass if he wass an old man or a rich man, and the money going from him until it iss not a penny of it that is left ! ”

“ But—”

“ And there iss more, Moira Fergus,” continued her father, vehemently. “ I will say to you many’s the time I hef no word for you—”

“ But only this once—”

“ Only this teffle ! I tell you to go away, Moira Fergus, and not to come pothering me with your Mr. Maclean’s and your Angus McEachrans ! Let him go to the men that hass been trinking his whiskey ! Let him go to the man who hass his share in the poat. But not to me ! ”

“ Father—”

“ I hef told you, Moira Fergus,” John Fergus said, recovering from his rage, “ that it is no word will pass between us ; and this is an end of it.”

With that he turned and went into the curing-house, slamming the door after him.

“ And it iss a hard man you are,” said Moira, sadly.

She walked back to her own little cottage, almost fearing that her husband might be inside. He was not ; so she entered, and sat down to contemplate the miserable future that lay before her, and to consider what she could do to induce Angus McEachran to remain in Ardtilleach, and take to the fishing and sober ways again.

First of all she thought of writing to her friends in London ; but Angus had the address, and she dared not ask him for it. Then she thought of making a pilgrimage all the way to Borva to beg of the great Mackenzie there to bring his influence to bear on her husband and on Mr. Maclean, the curer, so that some arrangement might be made between them. But how could she, all by herself, make her way to Borva ? And where might Angus McEachran be by the time she came back ?

Meanwhile Angus was not about the village, nor yet out on the rocks, nor yet down in the little harbor ; so, with a sad heart enough, she pre-

pared her frugal mid-day meal, and sate down to that by herself. She had no great desire for food, for she was crying most of the time.

Late that evening a neighbor came in, who said she had just returned from Harrabost.

"Ay, Moira," said she, "and what iss wrong now, that Angus McEachran will be for going away from Ardtilleach?"

Moira stared at her.

"I do not know what you mean, Mrs. Cameron," she said.

"You do not know, then? You hef not heard the news, that Angus McEachran will be away to Glasgow?"

Moira started up with a quick cry. Her first thought was to rush out of the house to overtake him and turn him back; but how was that possible?

"Oh, Mrs. Cameron, what iss it you tell me this tay? And where tit you see Angus? And are you quite sure?"

"Well, well, Moira," said the old woman, "it iss not any great matter the going to Glassgow; and if you will sit down now, I will tell you."

The girl sate down, silently, and crossed her hands on her lap. There was no more crying now; the last blow had fallen, and despair had supervened.

"You know, Moira, my son that lifs round at the pack of Harrabost, and I was ofer to see him, and all

wass ferry well, and his wife has got ferry well through her trouple. And when I wass for coming away, it wass Angus McEachran will come running up to the house, and ferry wild he wass in the look of him. 'Duncan Cameron,' says he, 'will you gif me your poat for two minutes or for three minutes, for I am told that this is the McAlisters' poat that iss coming along, and they are going to Taransay.' You know the McAlisters' poat, Moira, that they pought at Styornoway?"

Moira nodded assent.

"Well, you know, Moira, that Duncan was always a good frient to Angus McEachran; and he said, 'Yes, Angus McEachran, you may hef the poat, and she is down at the shore, and you can run her out yourself, for the oars and the tholepins are in her.' But Angus McEachran, he says, 'Duncan, will you come with me to pring pack the poat, for I will ask the McAlisters to tek me with them to Taransay; for it iss to Taransay I am going.'"

"Ay, to Taransay!" said Moira, eagerly. "And it wass only to Taransay?"

"I will tell you that, Moira," the old woman continued, who would narrate her story in her own way. "Well, well, I went to him, and I said, 'What iss it that takes you to Taransay, Angus McEachran, and when will you be coming pack from Taransay?' 'Mrs. Cameron,' says

he, 'I do not know when I will be coming pack from Taransay, for it iss to Glassgow I am going ; and it iss perhaps that I will neffer see Ardtilleach any more.' "

"No, no, no," the girl moaned ; "he did not say that, Mrs. Cameron !"

"And I said to him, 'It iss a foolish man you are, Angus McEachran, to speak such things, and you with a young wife in Ardtilleach. 'Ay,' said he, 'Mrs. Cameron, and if there was no young wife, it iss perhaps that I would be in Ardtilleach now, and hef my money and the share in the poat ; but it is a pad tay the tay that a young man marries a lass that iss tiscontented and hass no heart in the house, and that iss it that I am going away from Ardtilleach ; and Moira—well, Moira hass her father in Ardtilleach.' Ay, that iss what he said to me, Moira, ass Duncan and him they were putting out the poat from the shore."

"My father !" the girl murmured, "I hef not any father now—no, and not any husband—it iss the two that I hef lost. Ay, and Angus McEachran hass gone away to Glassgow."

There was no bitter wailing and lamentation ; only the hands in her lap were more tightly clenched. The red peats flickered up in the dusk ; and her face seemed drawn and haggard.

"Ay, and they pulled out to the McAlisters' poat when she came by, and I wass looking at them all the time from the shore, and Angus McEachran, when the McAlisters put their poat apout, he got apoard of her, and there wass not much talking petween them. And Duncan, I could hear him cry out, 'Good-pye to you this tay, Angus McEachran !' And Angus he cried out, 'Goot-pye to you, Duncan Cameron !' And when Duncan he came back to the shore, he will tell me that the McAlisters were going down to the ferry pig poat that iss at Taransay and that hass come round from Lochnamaddy, and Angus McEachran he wass saying that he would know some of the sailors in her, and the captain would tek him to Glassgow if he worked the passage. Ay, ay, Moira, I can see it iss not the good news I hef prought to you this night ; and it iss a pad thing for a young lass when her husband goes away to Glassgow ; but you do not know yet that he will stay in Glassgow, and you will write a line to him, Moira—"

"How can I write a line to him, Mrs. Cameron !" the girl said ; "there iss more people in Glassgow ass there iss in Styornoway, and the Lewis, and Harris all put together ; and how will they know which of them is Angus McEachran ?"

"Then you will send the letter to Styornoway, and you will gif it to the captain of the great poat, the Clansman ; and iss there any one in Glassgow that he will not know ?"

"A letter," Moira said, wistfully. "There iss no letter that will bring Angus McEachran pack, not now that he hass gone away from Ardtilleach. And I will say good-night to you now, Mrs. Cameron. It iss a little tired I am."

"You are not ferry well the night, Moira," said the old woman, looking at her. "I do not know that I will leaf you by yourself the night."

"But I will ferry much rather be by myself, Mrs. Cameron—ay, ay, I hef many things to think ofer ; and it iss in the morning I will come to see you, Mrs. Cameron, for I am thinking of going to Glassgow."

"Ay, you will come to me in the morning, like a good lass," said Mrs. Cameron, "and then you will think no more of going to Glassgow, which would be a foolish thing for a young lass, and it iss not yet, no, nor to-morrow, nor any time we will let you do such a foolish thing, and go away from Ardtilleach."

CHAPTER X.

A PROCLAMATION.

MOIRA did not go to Glassgow ; she remained in Ardtilleach, in the small cottage all by herself, whither

one or two of the neighbors, having a great pity for her condition, came to her, and occasionally brought her a little present of tea or sugar. How she managed to live at all, no one knew ; but she was very proud, and maintained to those who visited her that she was well off and content. She was very clever with her needle, and in this way requited her friends for any little kindness they showed her.

So the days and the weeks went by, and nothing was heard of Angus McEachran. Mr. MacDonald made inquiries of the men who had gone with him to Taransay, and they said he had undertaken to work his passage to Glassgow in a boat that was going round the island for salt fish. That was all they knew.

Well, Mr. MacDonald was not a rich man, and he had a small house ; but his heart was touched by the mute misery of this poor lass who was living in the cottage all by herself, as one widowed, or an out-cast from her neighbors. So he went to her and asked her to come over to the manse and stay there until something should be heard of her husband.

"It is a ferry goot man you are, Mr. MacDonald," she said, "and a ferry kind man you hef been, always and now too, to me ; but I cannot go with you to the manse."

"Kott pless me," he cried, impatiently. "How can you lif all

by yourself? It iss not goot for a young lass to lif all by herself."

"Ay, ay, Mr. MacDonald, and sometimes it is ferry goot; for she will begin to go back ofer what hass passed, and she will know where she wass wrong, and if there iss punishment for that, she will take the punishment to herself."

"And where should the punishment be coming," said he, warmly, "if not to the young man who would go away to Glassgow and leaf a young wife without money, without anything, after he has trank all the money!"

"You do not know—you do not know, Mr. MacDonald," she said sadly, and shaking her head. Then she added, almost wildly, "Ay, Mr. MacDonald, and you hef no word against the young wife that will trife her husband into the trinking, and trife him away from his own house and the place he was porn, and all his frients, and the poat that he had, and will trife him away to Glassgow—and you hef no word against that, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Well, it iss all ofer, Moira," said he, gently. "And what iss the use now of your lifeing here by yourself; and when your peats are finished who will go out and cut the peats for you?"

"I can cut the peats for myself, Mr. MacDonald," said she, simply; "and it iss one or two of the neigh-

bors they will cut some peats for me, for on the warm tays it iss little I hef to do, and I can go out and turn their peats for them."

"You will be better ofer at the manse, Moira."

"It iss ferry kind you are, Mr. MacDonald; but I will not go ofer to the manse."

In his dire perplexity Mr. MacDonald went away back to the manse, and spent a portion of the evening in writing a long and beautifully-worded letter to Mrs. Lavender, the young married lady who had been present at Moira's wedding, and who was now in London. If Mr. MacDonald's spoken English was peculiar in pronunciation, his written English was accurate enough; and to add a grace to it, and show that he was not merely an undisciplined islander, he introduced into it a scrap or two of Latin. He treated the story of Moira and her husband from a high literary point of view. He invited the attention of the great lady in London to this incident in the humble annals of the poor. She would doubtless remember, amid the gayeties of the world of fashion, and in the thousand distractions of the vast metropolis, the simple ceremony of which she had been a spectator in the distant islands, which, if they were not the *nitentes Cycladas* of the Roman bard—and so forth. Mr. MacDon-

ald was proud of this composition. He sealed it up with great care, and addressed it to "The Hon. Mrs. Lavender" at her house in London.

An answer came with surprising swiftness. Mr. MacDonald was besought to convoy Moira forthwith to the Island of Borva, where the wife of Mr. Mackenzie's keeper would give her something to do about Mrs. Lavender's house. Mr. and Mrs. Lavender would be back in the Hebrides in about three weeks. If the rains had been heavy, Moira was to keep fires in all the rooms of the house, especially the bedroom, incessantly. And Mrs. Lavender charged Mr. MacDonald with the fulfilment of these her commands. He was in no wise to fail to have Moira McEachran removed from her solitary cottage to the spacious house at Borva.

The minister was a proud man the day he went over to Ardtilleach with this warrant in his hand. Would Moira withstand him now? Indeed the girl yielded to all this show of authority; and humbly and gratefully, and silently she set to work to put together the few things she possessed, so that she might leave the village in which she was born. Indeed she went away from Ardtilleach with little regret. Her life there had not been happy. She went round to a few of the cottages to bid good-by to

her neighbors; and when it became known to John Fergus that his daughter was going away to Borva, he instantly departed for Killeena, on some mission or another, and remained there the whole day, so that she should not see him before leaving.

She remained a couple of days at the manse, waiting for a boat; and then, when the chance served, the minister himself went with her to Borva, and took her up to the house of Mr. Mackenzie, who was called the King of that Island. After a few friendly words from the great man—who then took Mr. MacDonald away with him, that they might have a talk over the designs of Prussia, the new bridge on the road to the Butt of Lewis, and other matters of great public importance—Moira was handed over to the keeper's wife, who was housekeeper there. She did not know what she had done to be received with so much friendliness and kindness; she was not aware, indeed, that a letter from London had preceded her arrival.

She slept in Mr. Mackenzie's house, and she had her meals there, but most of the day she spent in the empty house to which Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were shortly coming. What she could do in the way of preparing the place for their reception, she did right willingly. There was never a more devoted servant; and her gratitude towards those who

befriended her was on many occasions too much for her English—she had to escape into the Gaelic.

Then there was a great stir throughout the island, for every one knew that Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were on their way from London ; and the wonderful wagonette—which was in effect a boat placed on wheels, with oars and everything complete—that Mr. Lavender had built for himself, was, one morning, taken down Loch Roag, and landed at Callernish, and driven across to Stornoway. The Clansman was coming in that day.

It was in the dusk of the evening that the party from London—there were one or two strangers—arrived in the little bay underneath Mrs. Lavender's house, and walked up the steep incline, the luggage following on the shoulders of the sailors. And the very first words that Mrs. Lavender uttered on entering the house were—

“Where is Moira Fergus?”

The girl was greatly afraid to find herself in the presence of all these people ; and Mrs. Lavender, seeing that, quickly took her aside, into a room where they were by themselves. Moira was crying.

“And you have not heard anything more of him, Moira?” she asked.

“No, I hef no word at all,” the girl said, “and I do not look for that now, not any more, I hef lost

effery one now, both my father and my husband, and it iss myself that hass done it ; and when I think of it all, I will say to myself that neffer any one wass alive that hass done as I hef done—”

“No, no, no, Moira,” her friend said, “it is not so bad as that. Mr. MacDonald wrote to me that you fretted a great deal, and that Angus was very impatient, and he does not know what made him go to Glasgow, for how could that make it any better? But we will find him for you, Moira?”

“You will find him,” the girl said sadly ; “and what if you will find him? He will neffer come back to Ardtilleach. You do not know all about it, Mrs. Laffenter—no, I am sure Mr. MacDonald is a ferry kind man, and he would not tell you all about it. And this is why Angus McEachran will go away to Glasgow—that he hat trank all the money there was in the bank at Styornoway, and he hat no more a share in the poat, and he wass ashamed to go about Ardtilleach. And all that wass my doing—indeed it wass—”

“Well, well, you must give up fretting about it, Moira, and we will get Angus back to Ardtilleach, or back to Borva—”

“But you do not know, Mrs. Laffenter,” the girl said, in an excited and despairing way ; “you do not know the harm that wass done to Angus McEachran! And will he

effe get back from that—from the trinking, and the trinking, and I myself with ferry little thought of it at Ardtilleach? And where iss he now? And what iss he doing? It wass no more care for his life that he had when he went away from Ardtilleach!”

“Well, well, Moira,” said her friend, soothingly, “if you were to blame for part of it all, you have suffered a great deal; and so has he, for it is not a happy thing for a man to go away from a young wife, and go away among strangers, without any friend, or occupation, or money. You seem to have got into a bad plight at Ardtilleach—perhaps it was better to have it broken up like that. It was certainly a great pity that you did not discover all you know now before things came to their worst; but if they are at their worst, they must mend, you know. So you must not give up hope just yet.”

Moira suddenly recollected herself.

“I am keeping you from your frients, Mrs. Laffenter,” said she; “and it iss ferry kind of you, but I do not wish that you will be troubled apout me and Angus McEachran. And I hef not thanked you for sending me here; and I do not know how to do that; but it iss not bekass I hef no feeling apout it that I cannot thank you, Mrs. Laffenter.”

She was a servant in the house;

she would not shake hands with Mrs. Lavender. But her mistress took her hand, and said, with a great kindness in her face—

“I will say good-night to you now, Moira, for I may not see you again to-night. And to-morrow morning, you will come to me, and I will tell you what can be done about Angus McEachran.”

That evening, after dinner, Mrs. Lavender told the story to her guests from London; and she was obviously greatly distressed about it; but her husband said—

“The young fellow had no money; he is bound to be in Glasgow. We can easily get at him by advertising in the papers; and if you can persuade him to come to Borva, we shall have plenty of work for him, for he is a clever carpenter. But if he has enlisted—”

“I propose,” said one of the guests, a young American lady, recently married, “I propose that, if he has enlisted, we, who are here now, subscribe to buy him out.”

Her husband, a less impulsive and more practical person, got a piece of paper, and wrote these words on it:

Should this meet the eye of Angus McEachran, Ardtilleach, in the Island of Darroch, he will hear of something to his advantage by communicating at once with Mrs. Lavender, Sea-view, Island of Borva, Hebrides.

CHAPTER XI.

A PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS.

It would have been strange, indeed, if Angus McEachran had missed seeing this advertisement, for it was in all the Glasgow newspapers, morning after morning. It happened that late one night, he was in a miserable little public house near the Broomielaw, with two or three companions. He was now a very different man from the smart young fisherman who had lived at Ardtilleach. The ravages of drink were everywhere visible in his face, in his shabby dress, in his trembling hand. He was at the moment sullen and silent, though his companions, who were Highlanders employed about the harbor, were talking excitedly enough, in their native tongue.

McEachran had also got occasional work about the ships ; but he stuck to it only until he had earned a few shillings, and then he went off on a fresh drinking bout. There were always plenty of " loafers " about to join him ; he became a familiar figure in all the small public houses about ; and in garrulous moments he had told his companions something of his history, so that both himself and the circumstances of his leaving his native place were widely known.

On this evening the landlord of

the public house came into the den in which the Highlandmen were drinking, and said, pointing to a portion of the newspaper he held in his hands.

" Is this no you, McEachran ? "

Angus McEachran took the newspaper, and read the lines pointed out.

" Ay, it iss me," he said.

" Man, there's something there for ye ! " the publican said. " Can-na ye read it ? They've gotten some money for ye, as sure as ye're a leevin sinner ! "

" It iss no money they hef for me," said McEachran ; " it is these ferry grand people, and they will want me to go pack to Ardtilleach. No, I hef had enough, and plenty, and more ass that of Ardtilleach. The teffle will tek the tay that I go pack to Ardtilleach ! "

" Ye're a fulish cratur, man. Do ye think they wud gang to the awfu' expense o' advertisin' in the newspapers if there wasna something gran' waitin' for ye ? "

" Go and tam you, John Jameson, and go and pring me another mutchkin of your pad whiskey, that iss not fit to be put before swines."

The landlord did not care to quarrel with a good customer. He went off to get the whiskey ; merely saying, in an undertone.

" They Hielanmen, they've nae mair manners, than a stot ; but

they're the deevils to swallow whiskey."

He took no notice of the advertisement ; he did not even care to speculate on what it might mean. Had Angus McEachran parted from his wife merely through some fierce quarrel, and had he resolved to go to Glasgow as a measure of revenge, the prospect of a reconciliation might have been welcome. But it was not so. He had left Ardtilleach simply out of sheer despair. He had drank all his money ; he had disgraced himself in the eyes of his neighbors ; he had long ago abandoned any notion of having any real companionship with his wife. Besides, by this time he had acquired the drunkard's craving ; and in Glasgow, provided he could get any sort of work, he would be able to do as he pleased with his money. When he got to Glasgow he abandoned himself to drinking without any remorse. His chances in life were gone ; there remained but this. He had no boat, no home, no relatives ; his society was in the public house ; the one enjoyable experience of the day was the sensation of beatific stupor rising into his head after drinking repeated doses of whiskey. If he was ill and surly next morning, there was little sense of shame mingled with his mood. Nor did he consider himself a very ill-used person, whose wrongs ought to ex-

cite compassion. He simply was what he was, as the natural result of what had gone before ; and he looked neither to the past nor to the future. It was enough if he had the wherewithal in his pocket to pay for another dram ; and he did not care to ask whether, in the by-gone time, he was the injuring or the injured party.

But it became more difficult for him to get those odd jobs about the quays, for his unsteady habits were notorious, and no one could depend on his remaining sober for a single day. He became shabbier and shabbier in appearance ; and now the winter was coming on, and many a day he shivered with the cold as he walked aimlessly about the streets. When he could get no work, and when he had no money with which to go into a public house, he would often wander idly along the inner thoroughfares of the town, perhaps with some vague hope of meeting an acquaintance who would give him a glass. He was not afraid of meeting any of his old friends from Ardtilleach ; they could not have recognized him.

One night he was going up Candleriggs street in this aimless fashion, and a bitterly cold night it was. A north-east wind was blowing down the thoroughfares, driving a stinging sleet before it ; even the hardiest were glad to escape indoors from such weather. Angus Mc-

Eachran was not proof against cold and wet, as he had been in former days. He shivered like a reed in the wind; his limbs were chilled; if he had not been in the semi-be-mused state of the confirmed drunkard, he would have crept back to his miserable lodging. As it was, his only thought at the moment was to get a little shelter from the bitter wind.

He came to the entrance into the City Hall, and here was an open space, the light of which promised something of warmth. There were a great many people going in; and "Free Admission" stared every one in the face. McEachran crept into a corner, glad to be out of the cold for a moment.

The mere going by of people seemed to have a fascination for him. His head was dazed. When a friendly old gentleman in passing said, "Weel, ma man, are ye no comin' in? I dinna think you could do better," he answered, vaguely, "Yes," and joined the stream. There was a great crush; he was borne into the hall. So dense was the crowd that no one seemed to notice his shabby clothes. He got no seat, but he was well propped up; and the heat of the great assembly began to thaw his frozen limbs.

And who was this maniac and mountebank on the platform—this short, stout, ungainly man, with lank yellow hair, prominent front

teeth, and exceedingly long arms which he flung about as he stamped up and down and ranted? Truly, he was a ridiculous-looking person; and it was no wonder that highly-cultivated people, who read the reviews, and went into mild frenzy over blue and white china, and were agitated about the Eastern position, should refuse to go and hear this stump orator who was lecturing on temperance all over the country. The stories told of his *ad captandum* vulgarity and his irreverence, were shocking. Jokes were made about the wild fashion in which he delt with his h's; although, being a Yorkshireman of inferior education, he never added an h, he simply ignored the letter altogether, and was profoundly unconscious of doing so. He spoke with a strong north-country accent; he marched up and down the platform, with perspiration on his unlovely face; he sawed the air with his arms, and was by turns angry with a screeching anger and pathetic with a theatrical effusiveness. A person of refined taste could not approve of Mr. Robert J. Davis and his oratory. The exhibition was altogether too absurd. And yet there are in this country at present thousands of human beings whom that man rescued from ruin; there are thousands of homes which he restored to peace and happiness, after that seemed impossible; there are thousands of women who

cannot utter that commonplace name without tears of gratitude. And these people never thought the less of R. J. Davis because he ill-treated the letter h.

"Yes, my friends," this uncouth creature was saying, or rather bawling, "you see that miserable drunkard crawling along the street, dirt on his clothes, idiocy in his face, his eyes turned away for shame—and are you not right in despising him? Perhaps you don't know. Well, I'll tell you. That skulking creature, that reptile of the gutter, was once the heir of all the ages; and when he was born he came into a wonderful heritage that had been stored up for him through centuries and centuries. Great statesmen had spent their lives in making laws for him; patriots had shed their blood for him; men of science had made bridges, and railways, and steamships for him; discoverers and great merchants had gone over all the earth, and there was sugar coming from one place and cotton from another, and tea from another—from all parts of the world these things were coming. And for all this, and for far more than that, what was expected of him?—only that he should grow up a respectable citizen and enjoy the freedom and the laws that his forefathers fought for, and do his duty towards God, and the State, and the friends whose anxious care had guided him through all the perils of

childhood. What was his gratitude? What has he done?—what but throw shame on the name of the mother who bore him, making himself a curse to society and a disgrace to friends, who now avoid him? Has he a wife?—think of her? Has he children?—think of them! Good God! think of the young girl going away from her father's home, and trusting all her life to this new guidance, and looking forward to the years of old age, and the gentle going out of an honorable and peaceful life! And this is the guidance—this is the protection—that she sits up in the night time, with her eyes red with weeping, and she listens for the drunken stagger of an inhuman ruffian, and she prays that God would in His mercy send some swift disease upon her and hurry her out of her grief and her shame. That is the return that the drunkard makes for all the love and care that have been lavished on him—and you despise him—yes, as he despises himself as he crawls along the pavement, his home broken up and ruined, his wife and children sent shivering to the almshouse—"

There was a sharp, quick cry at this moment, and the lecturer stopped. The people near Angus McEachran turned round, and there was the young fisherman, with his eyes fixed and glazed, and his arm uplifted as if appealing to the lecturer.

"The man is mad," said one; "take him out!"

But they could not take him out, for the crowd was too dense; but as some one at the door seemed to have fancied that a woman had fainted, a tumbler of water was fetched and quickly handed over. McEachran drank some of the water.

"No," said he, seeing they were trying to make way for him; "I am for staying here."

And there he did stay, until the end of the lecture, which was not a long one. But that was only part of the evening's proceedings. Winding up with a passionate appeal to the people before him to come forward and sign the temperance pledge—for the sake of their friends if not of themselves—the lecturer stepped down to a space in front of the platform which had been kept clear, and there opened two large volumes which were placed on a narrow wooden table.

The people began to pour out of the various doorways; those who wished to stay and put down their names were gradually left behind. Among the latter was a young man who kept in the background, and about the very last to sign; when he went up to the table his face was pale, his lips quite firm, his hand tremulous. This was what he wrote: "*Angus McEachran*; age twenty-four; occupation, *fisherman*;

born, *Island of Darroch*; resides, *Glasgow*." Mr. R. J. Davis looked at this young man rather curiously—perhaps guessing, but not quite knowing what he had done that night.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

It was a terrible struggle. The thirst for drink had a grip on him that was an incessant torture. Then there was the crushing difficulty of obtaining work for a man of his appearance. First of all, he left Glasgow and his associates there, and went to Greenock; the fare by the steamboat was only sixpence. He went down to the quays there, and hung about; and at last his Highland tongue won him the favor of the captain of a small vessel that was being repaired in dock. He got McEachran some little bit of work to do; and the first thing to which the young man devoted his earnings was the purchase of some second-hand clothes. He was now in a better position to go and ask for work.

If a man can keep sober in Greenock, which is one of the most dingy and rainy towns in this or any other country, he will keep sober anywhere. Not only did McEachran keep sober, but his sobriety, his industry, and his ver-

satility—in Darroch he was famous for being able to turn his hand to anything—were speedily recognized by his masters, and ended by his securing permanent employment. Then wages were high—such wages as had never been heard of in the Hebrides ; and his wants were few. It was a strange thing to see the patient and dogged industry of the Norseman fight with the impatience of the Celt ; all day he would patiently and diligently get through his work, and then at night he would fret and vex his heart because he could not accomplish impossibilities. Nevertheless his companions knew that Angus McEachran was amassing money ; for he earned much and spent nothing.

Time went by ; he heard no news from Darroch or Killeenà ; and yet he would not write. Not only had he no hope of living again with Moira, but he did not wish for it. The recollection of bygone times was too gloomy. It was with quite another purpose that he was working hard and saving money.

One evening, going home from his work, and almost at the threshold of his own lodgings, he ran against a withered old Highlander named Connill, who was an under-keeper in Harris, and was acquainted with some of the Darroch people.

“ Kott pless me, iss it you, Angus McEachran ? ” the old man cried. “ Ay, it iss many a tay since I will

see you. And now you will come and hef a tram and a word or two together.”

“ If you will come into the house, Duncan Connill,” said Angus, “ and we are just at the house, I wal gif you a tram ; but I hef not touched the whiskey myself not for more ass fourteen months, I pelief. And are you ferry well, Duncan Connill ; and when wass you ofer in Darroch ? ”

They went in to the younger man’s lodgings, and in front of the cheerful fire they had a chat together, and McEachran told his old acquaintance all that had recently happened to him.

“ And now you will go pack to Darroch,” said the old Highlandman, “ Ay, and it iss ferry prout Moira Fergus will be to see you looking so well, and hafing such good clothes, and more as two pounds fife a week.”

“ Well, I am not going back to Darroch, and, yes, I am going back to Darroch,” said Angus ; “ but it iss not to stay in Darroch that I am going pack. Moira will be with her father ; and I will not tek her away from her father—it wass enough there wass of that pefore ; but I will mek the arranchement to gif her some money from one week to the next week, ass a man would gif his wife, and then I will come pack to Greenock, and she will stay with John Fergus—and tam John Fergus ! ”

"Ay, ay," said the old Highland-man, "and that iss ferry well said, Angus McEachran; and if the lass stay with her father, in the name of Kott let her stay with her father!—but if I wass you, Angus McEachran, it iss not much of the money I would gif to a lass that would stay with her father, and her a marriest wife—no, I would not gif her much of the money, Angus."

"Well," said Angus, "it iss more ass fourteen months or eighteen months that I hef giffen her no money at all."

"And I wass thinking," said Duncan Connill, "that it wass many the tay since I have been to Darroch; but when I wass there it wass said that Moira wass away ofer at Borva, with Mr. Mackenzie's daughter, that wass marriest to an Englishman—"

"Ay, ay," said Angus, "she wass a goot frient to Moira and to me; and if she would tek Moira away for a time to Borva, that wass a great kindness too; but you do not think, Duncan Connill, she will always stay at Borva, and her always thinking of John Fergus? But when she hass the money of her own, then she will do what she likes to do, even although she iss in the house of John Fergus."

"And when will you think of coming to Darroch, Angus?"

"I do not know that, Duncan Connill. We are ferry pusy just

now, and all the yard working ofer-time, and ferry good wages. But it iss not ferry long before I will come to Darroch; and if you would send me a line to tell me of the people there—what you can hear of them in Styornoway—it would be a kind thing to do, Duncan Connill."

And so the old man took back Angus McEachran's address to the Hebrides, and began to noise it abroad that Angus was making a great deal of money in Greenock, and that he had a notion of coming some day to Stornoway, and of getting into business there as a builder of boats.

About three weeks after Duncan Connill had seen Angus McEachran a young girl timidly tapped at the door of Angus' lodgings, and asked the landlady if he was inside.

"No, he's no," said the woman, sulkily; for landladies who have good lodgers do not like their being called upon by young women. The good lodgers are apt to marry and go away.

"When will he be in?" said the girl.

"I dinna ken."

So she turned away, and went out into the dismal streets of Greenock, over which there gloomed a gray smoky twilight. She had not gone far when she suddenly darted forward, and caught a man by the hand, and looked up into his face.

"Angus!"

"Ay, iss it you, Moira Fergus?" said he coldly, and drawing back. "And what hef you come for to Greenock?"

"It was to see you, Angus McEachran—but not that you will speak to me like that," said the girl, beginning to cry.

"And who iss with you?" said he; not moved in the least by her tears.

"There iss no one with me," she said, passionately; "and there wass no one with me all the way from Styornoway; and when Duncan Connill will tell me you wass in Greenock, I will say to him, 'I am going to see Angus McEachran; and I do not know what he will say to me; but I hef something to say to him.' And it iss this, Angus, that I wass a bad wife to you, and it iss many's the night I hef cried apout it since you wass away, from the night to the morning; and now that I hef been away from Darroch for more ass a year, it is not any more to Darroch I would be for going—no, nor to Borva, nor to Styornoway—but where you are,

Angus, if you will tek me—and where you will go, too—if that iss your wish, Angus McEachran."

She stood there, mutely awaiting his decision, and trying to restrain her tears.

"Moira," said he, "come into the house. It iss a great thing you hef told me this tay; and it iss ferry sorry I am that I tit not hear of it pefore. But there iss many a tay that iss yet to come, Moira."

These two went into Angus McEachran's lodgings; and the landlady was more civil when something of Moira's story was told her; and the young wife—with trembling hands and tearful eyes, but with a great and silent joy at her heart—sat down to the little tea-table on which Angus' evening meal was laid. That was not a sumptuous banquet; but there was no happier meeting anywhere in the world that night than the meeting of these two simple Highland folks. And here the story of Moira Fergus, and of her marriage with Angus McEachran, may fitly end.

*I have had the list sent to you with
a note letter underneath.*

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